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ABSTRACT

This report is a synthesis of what Public/Private ventures (P/PV) (Pennsylvania) has learned in 8 years of research into mentoring for adolescents. It also identifies the key issues that remain open with regard to mentoring. An impact study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters provides definitive evidence that youth can obtain benefits from participating in a well-run mentoring program. Research also indicates that the key to effective mentoring relationships lies in the development of trust between two strangers of different ages, and that the initial approach of the mentor largely determines whether the relationship becomes effective. One of the strongest of the research conclusions is that of the importance of providing mentors with support in their efforts to build trust and develop positive relationships with youth. Research also suggests that mentoring can be useful as a supplement to traditional youth services programs if sufficient support structures are built in for mentors. Another research finding is that it is not easy to attract mentors, and it is hard to provide the resources they need. Summaries are provided of the 10 mentoring reports P/PV has issued between 1988 and 1995. (Contains 117 references.) (SLD)

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Mentoring:

A Synthesis of P/PV's Research: 1988-1995

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Public/Private Ventures is a national non-profit organization that seeks to improve youth policies and programs. P/PV designs, tests and studies initiatives that increase supports and access to opportunity for teenagers in low-income communities; and provides training and technical assistance to practitioners and programs in the youth field.

Cover photo: Courtesy of Big Brothers/Big Sisters

P/PV

Mentoring:

A Synthesis of P/PV's Research: 1988-1995

Cynthia L. Sipe

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Preparation of this synthesis of P/PV's research on mentoring over the past eight years was funded by a grant from The Commonwealth Fund. Its support of our work in this area is greatly appreciated.

Producing a document that draws together the lessons of such a large body of research is a challenging undertaking and could not have been accomplished without the input of my colleagues at P/PV. Over the years, many P/PV staff have been involved with the research on mentoring. Reviewing their reports deepened my appreciation of the quality of the research and the clarity of their presentations of the findings.

Early drafts of this report were reviewed by several P/PV staff including Jean Grossman, Joe Tierney, Michelle Gambone, Kristine Morrow, Dine Watson, Jeffrey Greim, Mike Sack, Tom Smith and Natalie Jaffe. They not only contributed to decisions about how to focus the report, but also provided a check on the accuracy of my conclusions. Throughout the process of writing and revising the report, Gary Walker's insights and ideas for how best to present the information were critical in shaping the final product; he was also responsible for much of the content in the final section of the report. Mark Hughes provided valuable suggestions for the report's design.

Finally, I would like to thank P/PV's support staff who contributed to the final product. Audrey Walmsley was responsible for word processing and entering changes through the multiple drafts of the document; Maxine Sherman did the final processing and proofreading.

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Foreword

In 1988, Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) published Partners in Growth: Elder Mentors and At-Risk Youth, the first study in what was to become for P/PV an extended and extensive examination of mentoring for adolescents. That first study suggested that mentoring had great potential to improve the lives and prospects of disadvantaged teenagers.

The report presented in this volume is a synthesis of what we have learned in the subsequent eight years, and identifies the key issues that remain open. Also included are summaries of the 10 reports on which the synthesis is based, as well as a bibliography drawn from all the reports.

Our overall conclusions are clear. First, it is possible to create, between an adult and a youth who were previously strangers, a relationship that markedly advances the youth's development, and markedly deters his or her detrimental behavior. Second, these relationships can be fostered with a high degree of success, in widely varying localities, without the presence of charisma or other special factors whose rarity is often cited as a barrier to expansion of effective interventions.

The simplicity, effectiveness and widespread applicability of mentoring should not seduce us into thinking that its execution offers no worthy challenges. Mentoring's potential for intimacy between previous strangers creates the possibility for benefits—and risks—that many more "complex" interventions simply do not contain. It works best within a supportive structure, and when the adult mentor behaves in certain ways. This report spells out the supportive structures and behaviors that produce effective mentoring.

Our best estimate is that there are now in the United States no more than 350,000 mentors–and at least several million youth who would accept and benefit from adult mentoring. Thus securing the full benefits of mentoring depends in good part on its programmatic expansion. But securing those benefits also rests on the imaginative integration of mentoring's lessons into other youth-focused efforts: to make our schools more effective; to build a transition between school (or the street) and work; to lower the recidivism of young offenders; to reduce the attraction of gangs, violence and drugs; to reduce teen pregnancy and improve teen parenting. For it is unlikely that any initiative to assist young people will make much difference unless it is securely and determinedly rooted in building trusting relationships between them and adults.

In a sense, mentoring is an excellent example of the puzzling disagreement in the youth field between those who conclude "We know what works, let's just get on with it," and others who say "Nothing works well for disadvantaged adolescents—social programs are too little and too late for that age group." The truth lies in the rockier ground between: we do know a lot about what helps youth develop and transition effectively to adulthood. And much of what we do know is not esoteric but accessible to common sense—like the need for caring adults. The real issue is whether we can stimulate, create and expand these common sense conditions.

Mentoring has successfully traversed that rocky terrain. We should mine its possibilities to the limit.

Gary Walker
President

I. Mentoring: A Synthesis of P/PV's Research: 1988-1995

Introduction

The special importance of adolescence in the maturation process has long been recognized (Pittman and Wright, 1991; Dryfoos, 1990; Sarigiani et al., 1990; Taylor, 1989). Adolescence is a period for loosening home ties, exploring the world outside the family, trying out new roles and learning to be independent. Traversing this difficult terrain successfully is facilitated by the presence of trusted adults to whom youth can turn for guidance and support. Through interaction with others, particularly supportive adults, youth acquire the skills necessary for successfully negotiating the world at large.

During the 1970s and 1980s, a number of studies documented the increasing number of youth growing up without sufficient adult support (Hamburg, 1987; Greenberger and Steinberg, 1986; Lipsitz, 1977; Timpane et al., 1976; Coleman, 1974). Greater geographic mobility, the dearth of employers and viable institutions in many poor neighborhoods, both parents working, and growing numbers of single-parent families left many youth without access to sufficient numbers of trusted adults. As The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development concluded: "Many young people feel a desperate sense of isolation. Surrounded only by their equally confused peers, too many make poor decisions with harmful or lethal consequences" (1989).

Publicly funded youth services did not (and still do not) put a special emphasis on this growing need, but rather retained their traditional focus on the acquisition of basic skills needed to be successful in late schooling or in the labor market. Schools concentrated on teaching basic academic skills; special training designed for youth who had not done well in school were, especially from 1981 onward under the Job Training Partnership Act, based on models developed for adults, and did not attempt to address the special developmental needs of adolescents.

During the mid to late 1980s, mentoring programs for disadvantaged youth supported by private funds proliferated. Growing interest in mentoring reflected concerns about the modest effectiveness and relatively high cost of most traditional social programs for youth, and the declining availability of supportive adults in the lives of many young people.

While educational institutions and employment and training programs focused on skill development, other publicly funded youth programs concentrated on preventing or "fixing" specific problems. Dropout-prevention programs provided tutoring and remedial instruction to improve grades. Pregnancy-prevention programs conveyed knowledge about contraceptive methods. Substance abuse-prevention programs targeted skills for saying "no." Very few of these programs could, under existing funding regulations or within the length of time youth were allowed to stay in them, provide the basic relationships and supports that would help youth develop into confident, competent, contributing members of society.

Many educators and program operators knew that the funding rules and short-term goals were not appropriate or sufficient for the youth with whom they were dealing. The youth themselves were also quick to recognize what was most important to them: a 1988 P/PV study, Youth Motivation: At-Risk Youth Talk to Program Planners, based on conversations with youth, concluded that the development of a supportive relationship with an adult was frequently the deciding factor in a youth's decision either to stick with a program through completion or leave prematurely (Higgins, 1988).

As the need became more obvious—and the shortcomings of traditional programs and services became clearer—many social entrepreneurs and funders turned to mentoring as a quick, cheap and appealing way to fill the vacuum. Existing evidence about the feasibility, cost, impact and "best practices" of mentoring were scant as the mentoring movement took off with high expectations (Freedman, 1992).

P/PV's Research Agenda

Intrigued by the potential of mentoring, but concerned about the lack of solid information about its implementation, cost or effectiveness, P/PV developed an extensive research agenda to explore whether "created" adult/youth relationships could in fact have positive impacts on healthy adolescent development. In addition to determining whether youth could benefit from mentoring, our agenda also sought to understand the nature and practices of effective mentoring relationships, and the administrative structures and practices that facilitate their development. We were also interested in exploring whether effective mentoring practices could be integrated into mainstream, publicly funded youth-serving institutions, and the extent to which large numbers of adults could be recruited to serve as mentors for disadvantaged youth.

Because no one study could adequately address all questions of interest, P/PV's research agenda comprised a set of studies that, together, would provide credible evidence relating to each of these issues. We looked at a variety of programs, including 15 Big Brothers/Big Sisters agencies, six of Campus Compact's Campus Partners in Learning programs, four of Temple University's Linking Lifetimes programs, and two pilot programs developed by P/PV in the juvenile justice system.

This range of programs allowed us to examine mentoring in a variety of settings—programs situated in schools, on college campuses and in the juvenile justice system, as well as several without institutional affiliations. These programs drew on various populations—college students, senior citizens, working professionals—as a source of volunteer mentors. And they served youth facing many different obstacles—juvenile offenders, parenting adolescents, at-risk middle school youth, youth from single-parent homes—nearly all of

whom resided in low-income urban environments with only modest levels of adult support outside the home, and sometimes in the home, too.

Although the programs studied vary in many respects, they share a common definition of mentoring—one-to-one relationships in which an adult volunteer and a youth meet frequently over a period of several months or years. In these programs, mentors are expected primarily to offer support and friendship, rather than to try changing youth's behavior.

Not all programs that describe themselves as "mentoring" programs share this approach. Some recruit adults to serve as "mentors" for a short period of time and to seek a very specific, narrowly defined goal. Other programs recruit volunteers to "mentor" a group of youth. Our research did not include examination of either short-term, narrowly focused one-to-one programs or models that did not offer one-to-one relationships as the primary intervention.

The research employed several types of study:

- Implementation analyses focused on program practices such as training, screening, matching and supervision. Pushing beyond mere descriptions of these practices, we looked for evidence connecting specific practices with the frequency of pairs' meetings and whether significant relationships developed.
- Relationship-formation studies examined the content and processes underlying programmatically created matches. Relying on extensive qualitative interview data, we sought to uncover factors contributing to or inhibiting the development of satisfying and effective relationships.
- Culminating the five-year initiative was a rigorous random assignment impact study of the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program. The study provided the first definitive evidence regarding actual benefits youth can derive from participation in a mentoring program.

During the course of the research initiative, P/PV staff visited 27 programs to observe operations, review records, and conduct interviews and focus groups. We interviewed more than 150 program and other institutional staff; administered questionnaires to more than 200 mentors and 200 youth participants; led approximately 30 focus groups with volunteers, youth, staff and parents; completed telephone surveys with more than 1,000 youth and parents, and more than 800 volunteers; and conducted more than 600 in-depth, semistructured face-to-face interviews with youth and mentors representing 230 matches. This work led to a series of nine separate reports.

Responding to the five original questions that guided our mentoring research agenda, this report presents the evidence and conclusions we have compiled from the various studies, thus synthesizing what we have learned from the overall initiative. Those five questions were:

1. Can participating in mentoring programs make important and observable changes in the attitudes and behaviors of at-risk youth?
2. Are there specific practices that characterize effective mentoring relationships?
3. What program structures and supports are needed to maximize "best practices" among mentors?
4. Can mentoring be integrated into large-scale youth-serving institutions?
5. Are there large numbers of adults with enough flexible time and emotional resources to take on the demands of mentoring at-risk youngsters?

Although the state of knowledge about mentoring is considerably greater in 1996 than it was when P/PV undertook the initiative in 1988, some important questions remain. The final section of the paper addresses these questions and suggests further work that could advance, in a practical way, the practice of mentoring.

The Major Findings

1 Can participating in mentoring programs make important and observable changes in the attitudes and behaviors of at-risk youth?

Because determining program impacts is both a lengthy and costly undertaking, we elected to conduct only one such study. Our conclusions about the effects of mentoring programs on the youth who participate in them are drawn solely from our impact study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters (BB/BS). We selected BB/BS for this research primarily because of the longevity and stability of the program. BB/BS is also one of the few programs large enough, with a large waiting list of youth, to successfully enroll sufficient youth in the research to be able to determine program impacts. From site selection and research design, through data analysis and publication of the final report, we spent four and a half years conducting this study.

P/PV's impact study of BB/BS provides definitive evidence that youth can obtain benefits through participating in a well-run mentoring program. Youth who were assigned to be matched with Big Brothers or Big Sisters experienced significant benefits in a number of important areas, compared with their counterparts who remained on agency waiting lists.[1] Little Brothers and Little Sisters were 46 percent less likely than controls to initiate drug use and 27 percent less likely to initiate alcohol use during the study period. They were nearly one-third less likely to hit someone and skipped half as many days of school as control youth. They felt more competent about their ability to do well in school and, in fact, received slightly higher grades by the end of the study, and they reported more positive relationships with their friends and parents. These effects were sustained for both boys and girls across all races.

Probably the most encouraging aspect of these findings is the lack of focus of the BB/BS program on these specific outcomes. Big Brothers and Big Sisters are instructed to gain the trust of and become friends with the youth with whom they are matched. These volunteers are not trained in drug prevention, remedial tutoring, antiviolence counseling or family therapy. And yet, by becoming a friend and providing support to these youth, these mentors positively influenced their lives in many ways.

The primary limitation of these findings is the narrow age range of the youth involved. Although BB/BS programs serve youth as young as five and as old as 18, our research focused on youth ages 10 through 15. The majority of youth who enrolled in these BB/BS agencies, and who consequently participated in the research, were between the ages of 11 and 14. Thus, these results cannot be generalized to either younger or older youth.

We are frequently asked whether we believe the impacts will hold up over time. Will youth continue to avoid drugs and alcohol? Will they continue to perform well in school and get along with their peers and parents? Because agencies were free to match control youth with mentors at the conclusion of the 18-month follow-up period, it is unlikely that we will ever be able to answer this question.

More important, we do not believe that this represents a sound path of inquiry for developing effective youth policy. Its underlying assumption (for some) is one that has plagued social policy for several decades: that there does exist a single intervention that can change a youth's life path forever, and that the job of social policy is to find it.

Although there are youth whose lives have been dramatically and durably altered because of one experience, they are the exception. The vast majority of youth require a succession of effective experiences—be they "natural" or "programmatic." The puzzle for social policy is to find out what an effective and cost-efficient threshold succession of experiences looks like.

The benefit of the BB/BS impact findings is that they show what one important and effective piece of the puzzle is.

2 Are there specific practices that characterize effective mentoring relationships?

Our research indicates that the key to creating effective mentoring relationships lies in the development of trust between two strangers of different ages. Our research also suggests that the initial approach of the mentor largely determines whether a match develops into an effective relationship.

Volunteers typically come to mentoring programs because they want to help youth. Some approach the relationship with an eye toward reforming their mentees, and focus immediately on this task. These adults are often frustrated by youth's lack of receptivity. But without putting in the time and effort required to develop a trusting relationship, mentors cannot expect to affect the youth with whom they interact.

Learning to trust requires time; youth cannot be expected to trust a strange adult simply because other adults call him or her a "mentor." Mentors who understand that trust-building is a gradual process, and who focus their attention on becoming a friend to their youth, find that the types of support they can offer, and that will be accepted, broaden considerably over time. Volunteers who take the time to develop trusting relationships with youth are much more likely to foster the changes that other volunteers pursue.

Our research indicates that, although no one time period defines how long it takes for trust to develop in every adult and adolescent pair, generally about six months of regular meetings were required. In addition, effective mentors are more likely to engage in the following practices:

- They involve youth in deciding how the pair will spend their time together.
- They make a commitment to being consistent and dependable—to maintain a steady presence in the youth's life.
- They recognize that the relationship may be fairly one-sided for some time, and may involve silence and unresponsiveness from the young person. The adult takes responsibility for keeping the relationship alive.
- They pay attention to youth's need for "fun." Not only is having fun a key part of relationship-building, but it provides youth with valuable opportunities that are often not otherwise available to them.
- They respect the youth's viewpoint.
- They seek, and utilize, the help and advice of program staff.

Less effective mentors are likely not to follow these practices. In contrast, these volunteers tend to:

- Attempt to transform or reform the youth by setting goals and tasks early on, and adopting a parental or authoritative role in their interactions with youth.
- Emphasize behavior changes more than the development of mutual trust and respect in the relationship.
- Have difficulty meeting with youth on a regular and consistent basis, often demanding that youth play an equal role in initiating contact.
- Attempt to instill a set of values that may be different or inconsistent with those the youth is exposed to at home.
- Ignore the advice of program staff about how to respond to difficulties in the relationship.

Adopting these strategies most often leads to dissatisfaction with the match and premature termination. In our study of BB/BS relationships, we found that over 70 percent of the matches that included volunteers who took these approaches met only sporadically, and nearly 70 percent ended in the nine months between our initial and second interviews.

In contrast, for matches whose volunteers adopted the effective approaches described previously, more than 90 percent met on a regular and consistent basis, and only nine percent of these relationships had ended at the time of the second interview.

Clearly, volunteers' approach to the match is critical in determining the type of relationship that develops between the partners. The key question for mentoring programs, then, is how to ensure that volunteers will approach a match with an eye toward building trust and establishing a friendship.

3 What program structures and supports are needed to maximize "best practices" among mentors?

One of the strongest conclusions we have reached from our research is the importance of providing mentors with support in their efforts to build trust and develop positive relationships with youth. Most volunteers and youth cannot be simply matched and then left to their own devices; programs need to provide some infrastructure that fosters and supports the development of effective relationships.

Across the different mentoring programs we visited and studied, the extent to which they included standardized procedures in the areas of screening, orientation, training, match supervision and support, matching practices, regular meeting times, etc., varied tremendously. Some programs included virtually none of these elements of program infrastructure, while others were highly structured. From our observations of these programs, we believe that three areas are vitally important to the success of any mentoring program: screening, orientation and training, and support and supervision.

The screening process provides programs with an opportunity to select those adults who are most likely to be successful as mentors; that is, individuals who already understand that a mentor's primary role is to develop a friendship with these youth. Orientation and pre-match training provide important opportunities to ensure that youth and mentors share a common understanding of the adult's role in these programmatically created relationships, and to help mentors develop realistic expectations of what they can accomplish. Ongoing supervision and support of matches by staff is critical for ensuring that pairs meet regularly over a substantial period of time, and develop positive relationships.

Screening

The process of developing a long-term, high-quality relationship begins with the selection of mentors from among the adults who present themselves as potential volunteers. Mentoring can be difficult and time consuming. Program staff should review volunteers' life commitments and discuss how they intend to fit their mentoring responsibilities into their overall schedules. If the pair does not meet regularly, the potential for the adult to influence the youth can never be realized. Such inconsistency may also cause damage to the youth's ability to trust. Individuals whose other commitments indicate they will have difficulty meeting with a youth on a consistent basis should be screened out.[7]

The screening process can also be useful in determining a potential mentor's approach to the match. Individuals who understand the importance of building trust and being a friend to the youth with whom they are matched are most likely to experience success in the relationship. Those who indicate they are interested in being a mentor to "transform" a youth should probably be screened out of mentoring programs and steered toward programs with less emphasis on one-to-one relationships (e.g., those stressing specific instrumental goals).[8]

Orientation and Training

Having selected the best volunteers, programs need to ensure that adults are prepared for their new roles as mentors by providing good orientation and training. The amount and focus of the training provided varied widely across the programs we studied. Some programs offered minimal orientations focused on explaining program procedures and requirements. At the other extreme were programs that required extensive training that included sessions on program rules, youth's backgrounds, theories of adolescent development, active listening skills, problems mentors typically encounter and so forth. The optimal amount of training lies somewhere

between these two extremes. Mentors often note that, although formal training is helpful, the best training is experience in the program.

Good relationships are based upon mutual respect and trust; programmatically created mentoring relationships are no different from naturally occurring relationships in this regard. Good training equips volunteers with the information and strategies they need to maximize their chances of developing mutually satisfying relationships with youth. Toward this end, training should focus on the practices of effective mentors.

By encouraging mentors to approach the match with the simple goal of developing a good relationship, program staff can help foster realistic expectations among mentors. Mentors with unrealistic expectations of reforming the youth will inevitably become frustrated and disappointed when these expectations are not met. Through initial orientation and training sessions, staff can direct volunteers toward realistic and rewarding goals.

Ongoing Supervision and Support

Regular supervision or monitoring is crucial to ensure that pairs are actually meeting on a regular basis. When professional staff spend more time contacting volunteers, mentors have better "attendance" and develop better quality matches, compared with programs in which staff have minimal contact with volunteers. Programs in which mentors were not contacted regularly by program staff reported the most "failed" matches—those that do not meet consistently and, thus, never developed into relationships.

In addition, mentors (and consequently youth) benefit considerably from the support they receive from program staff. Most mentors experience some frustration—especially early in a match's life—because youth fail to show up for scheduled meetings, will not talk about personal issues, are not interested in the activities the mentor has planned, etc. Access to either professional staff or other mentors, through a mentor support group, can help volunteers get through the rough spots so that matches have a chance to develop, rather than dissolve prematurely.

Mentor support groups are used extensively by some programs. They are often helpful because volunteers can discuss their frustrations and problems with others who are facing (or have previously faced) the same challenges. However, mentor support groups can sometimes be like "the blind leading the blind," reinforcing unproductive strategies for coping with difficulties in the relationship. Some level of experienced and professional oversight is usually needed.

Caseworkers (or other professional staff) can be instrumental in helping volunteers forge appropriate roles. Mentors may need to be reminded of the need for patience and the importance of taking the youth's interests into account. Regular interaction between volunteers and staff will not only ensure that pairs are meeting, but can help promote the development of positive and lasting relationships.

Many mentoring programs have, for funding or other reasons, not been able to incorporate these critical infrastructure elements into their regular practices. Some programs, which do not employ sufficient staff to maintain regular contact with and provide support to mentors, have developed program structures (e.g., pre-established regular meeting schedules between mentors and mentees, and transportation assistance) that partially compensate for lack of staff. For mentors with busy schedules, having a specific time to meet helps build their mentoring obligation securely into their overall commitments. The programs that relied on these structures found that "attendance" on the part of mentors improved.

However, reliance on structural program features does little to foster or direct the development of positive and effective relationships. Thus, while set meeting times and transportation assistance are useful

practices, they are less effective than the provision of regular, ongoing support from professional staff. Providing youth with mentors, without sufficient resources to support those mentors, will most likely not generate a high percentage of long-term, successful relationships.

Matching—The Least Critical Element

In the above discussion of the critical elements of program structure, we omitted matching practices. This is not to say that matching is not important, but rather that our studies did not show it to be as important an element as the three discussed above, nor did it produce "objective" lessons. The most objective lesson is that matches that take into account both the youth's and mentor's preferences, in terms of both demographic characteristics and activities they want to participate in, are more likely to result in relationships that are satisfying to both members of the pair. However, overriding these factors in determining whether a match will be successful is the approach taken by the mentor. Regardless of other characteristics, mentors who focus their efforts on building trust are more likely to develop an effective relationship with their youth than are those who do not.

None of the "objective" factors (e.g., age, race and gender) that staff take into account when making a match correlates very strongly with either frequency of meeting, length of match or effectiveness. This is an important overall finding, since it means that there are no administratively easy or low-cost ways to produce a high percentage of effective matches. It also means that, *in general*, it is not important to ensure same gender or same race matches in order to produce effective mentoring relationships.

Across the programs we studied, the majority of youth being served are members of minority groups. Some programs stress the importance of providing a positive role model who is also a minority. At the same time, mentoring programs have had tremendous difficulty recruiting sufficient minority volunteers, especially males, to serve as mentors.[3] Thus, programs commonly match minority youth with white volunteers.

Our examination of the frequency of meetings and longevity of relationships for both same-race and cross-race matches found no significant difference between these two types of matches.[4] In-depth interviews with both youth and mentors in several programs suggest that cross-race matches are nearly as likely as same-race matches to form positive relationships. And analyses of BB/BS data uncovered no differences in outcomes for youth involved in same-race versus cross-race relationships. None of these studies provided definitive evidence in and of itself, but, taken together, the data suggest strongly that cross-race matches are viable alternatives to same-race matches.

Philosophically, programs may prefer to make same-race matches. And parents, as well as youth, sometimes prefer a mentor of the same race. Given the importance to relationship-building of respecting participants' wishes, programs should continue to honor these preferences and make same-race matches whenever possible. At the same time, it is clear that youth who wait a long time for a same-race mentor are in most cases only delaying the benefits that a mentor of any race can provide.

4 Can mentoring be integrated into large-scale youth-serving institutions?

We have, at this date, been able to generate evidence on this issue within only one setting—the juvenile justice system. Our experience in this effort cannot be generalized to other youth-serving institutions. We believe, however, that some of the lessons we gleaned from this pilot experience are transferable and useful to other settings.

The juvenile justice agencies with which we worked took on mentoring as a way to extend services to youth without allocating any additional resources. Existing caseworkers were expected to take on supervision of the mentor-youth matches without any reduction in their other responsibilities. Not surprisingly, given what we have learned about the importance of training and ongoing supervision of mentors, the agencies were for the most part not successful.

Across both pilot programs, only a limited number of matches were both sustained over time and met regularly. About 34 percent of matches met for three months or less, while only 38 percent met for longer than six months. Even among those matches that were sustained over time, about 30 percent met only sporadically.

Caseworkers given the responsibility for supervising matches and ensuring that meetings occurred were hampered by several factors. First, and foremost, was the addition of mentor supervision to their existing set of responsibilities. Second, caseworkers often felt they had no authority over mentors, who were all volunteers, and were thus reluctant to follow up with those who failed to show up for meetings with their youth. Finally, mentors' roles within the system were not clearly defined—were they part of a youth's treatment plan or extraneous to institutional treatment? Individual caseworkers' views of the mentors' roles affected the amount of information they shared and the support they provided to mentors.

To alleviate the problems associated with reliance on caseworkers to supervise and support mentors, agencies subsequently appointed "mentor coordinators" to fill this role. Again, however, these duties were added to the responsibilities of existing staff. And since mentoring responsibilities were accorded low priority, staff were often pulled away by other duties.

Failure to allocate additional resources to fund the necessary infrastructure for effective mentoring spelled the downfall of these experimental efforts. Other youth-serving institutions need to avoid this mistake if efforts to develop mentoring components within the settings of other youth-serving institutions are to be successful.

Supplementing traditional youth services with mentoring remains an attractive option for many public youth-serving institutions, particularly in light of the positive findings from P/PV's impact study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters. However, just as stand-alone mentoring programs cannot operate effectively without sufficient support structures for mentors, public institutions that attempt to add mentoring to their range of services also need to provide mentors with support. Existing staff in these institutions have neither the time nor appropriate preparation to take on the additional tasks related to training and supervising a corps of volunteer mentors. Successful integration of mentoring into these organizations requires resources dedicated to operating the mentoring component.

5 Are there large numbers of adults with enough flexible time and emotional resources to take on the demands of mentoring at-risk youth?

None of our studies provides powerful evidence on the issue of how many volunteers can be recruited to serve as mentors for disadvantaged youth. Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America, with about 75,000 matches nationally, is the largest program we studied. By some estimates, there may be anywhere from 5 million to 15 million youth who could benefit from being matched with a mentor—with about only one-third of a million mentors now in place. Although there have been periodic calls over the past decade for a vast expansion of mentors, up to now no one has successfully tackled this task operationally. New efforts to develop large-scale mentoring programs, under way in a number of cities, should be watched closely as they attempt to push the limits of how many adults will actually come forward to serve.

Although we were not able to address the scale question directly, we did examine recruitment practices in all of the programs we studied. Across programs, the youth desiring mentors nearly always outnumber the adults who volunteer their services. But limited resources affect the level of effort programs devote to recruitment activities. In most programs, the staff responsible for recruiting and screening volunteer applicants also have other program responsibilities. The amount of time devoted to recruitment and screening is limited, and the number of volunteers that programs process and match with youth is most likely less than it would be if more resources were devoted to recruitment.

Our most extensive study of recruitment and screening practices followed the process from initial inquiry to match at eight BB/BS agencies. Over a six-month period, these agencies received inquiries from more than 2,500 individuals. Less than half (1,099) followed up their initial call by making a formal application to be a mentor. BB/BS applicants are generally required to attend an initial orientation, authorize criminal records and motor vehicles checks, participate in a personal interview conducted by a case manager and submit three personal references. The final step in the screening process is a home assessment, and several agencies conduct training prior to matching volunteers with youth.

Three to nine months after their initial inquiry, about 35 percent of applicants had either been matched or were waiting to be matched, while about 30 percent had either withdrawn or been rejected during the screening process. The applications of the remaining 35 percent were still being processed. Our analysis estimated that virtually no one is matched during the first six weeks after applying and about 37 percent of applicants will be matched within eight months of application. The remaining applicants either drop out (or are screened out) or are still having their applications processed fully eight months after applying. The unavailability of staff to conduct components of the screening process is a major factor in the length of the BB/BS intake process.

Primarily because limited resources have been devoted to recruitment, most mentoring programs have concluded that the most effective strategy for recruiting new volunteers is word of mouth. However, some programs have successfully used other institutions (e.g., the NAACP and the Retired Senior Volunteer Program) to recruit volunteers. This strategy gives programs access to populations they might not otherwise be able to recruit. Also, relying on a collaborating organization to do some recruitment frees resources that can then be used to screen volunteers and support mentors already in the program.

However, even if programs were able to recruit larger numbers of volunteers, they would still be constrained by the resources available to put into place for the new volunteers the three critical elements of infra-

structure detailed earlier. Staff with diverse responsibilities not only have limited time available for doing recruitment and screening, but are also limited in the number of matches they can adequately supervise and support at any given time.

With the renewed call for large numbers of mentors in the last year, important and complex questions remain: how many adults will come forward, and will the resources and practices necessary for effective mentoring be in place? These are critical issues that need to be addressed more systematically if we are to exploit the usefulness of mentoring to the fullest extent.

Where Does Mentoring Go from Here?

P/PV's research on mentoring has generated important findings. First and foremost, the field now has definitive evidence of the positive benefits mentoring can produce. Not only is this welcome information for the mentoring movement; it is good news for the youth field in general. During a time when the prevailing consensus is that "nothing works," particularly for adolescents, evidence that refutes this is all the more important. Yet, several critical issues remain.

Quality Control

Although mentoring can be an effective strategy for youth programming, it is only as good as the relationships that develop between the adult volunteers and the youth with whom they are matched. As the number of mentoring programs continues to grow, the issue of quality looms as a paramount concern. The field lacks an agreed-upon set of standards or bench marks that could be used to guide the development and monitoring of quality programs and effective mentoring relationships. Thus, funders are often left wondering about the effectiveness of the programs they support; programs, in turn, have no mechanism based on evidence for addressing this issue.

Conducting the rigorous impact research that we completed for BB/BS programs is expensive and time consuming. Not every mentoring program can, or should, be the subject of such rigorous study. Instead, we believe that the field needs to develop a set of standards and bench marks, based on previous research, that both programs and funders can use to track the implementation of mentoring. To the extent that these standards and bench marks can be reliably tied to the benefits we have observed, programs and their funders would be able to draw some inferences about their likely impacts, and make whatever adjustments are called for.

Implications for Public Institutions

Our research examined the feasibility of integrating mentoring into large youth-serving institutions only within the juvenile justice system. We were able to draw some lessons from this work—primarily the importance of devoting additional resources to manage and support a corps of volunteer mentors—that are applicable to other institutions as well.

But our research on effective mentoring practices may also have other lessons for youth-serving institutions. Volunteer mentors are not the only adults with whom youth in these settings interact. We need to address the issue of how to incorporate the principles of effective mentoring (e.g., the importance of building trust and developing a friendship with youth) into the practices of other adults who work in these settings (Walker and Freedman, 1996).

Scale and Costs

We still have only limited knowledge about the maximum number of youth who can ultimately be served by mentoring programs. Our research included an in-depth examination of the largest program in the country—Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America—but even BB/BS agencies serve a relatively small number of youth, currently 75,000 matches annually. What is not clear is whether current programs are anywhere near the upper limit of adults who are willing and able to serve as mentors, and do so effectively.

Recent months have brought a resurgence of interest in starting new mentoring programs and renewed calls for volunteers to come forward to serve. Several states and localities, including California, New York City, Kansas City (MO) and Newark (NJ), have recently launched efforts to recruit thousands of adults to become mentors to disadvantaged youth. Similar campaigns were launched in the late 1980s, then faded without approaching their initial, ambitious goals. These earlier campaigns stressed the simplicity of mentoring, and lacked the resources to provide sufficient infrastructure to support those volunteers who did come forward.

The failure of these earlier efforts raises two related issues that should be examined as these new efforts are mounted. We do not know how a locality does, or should, operationalize such a massive effort. What type of staffing and resources is needed to recruit, train and support such a large cadre of volunteers? Earlier efforts were not subjected to systematic assessment and, thus, we know little about how and why they failed. We should not make the same mistake this time around.

Second, the field needs more precise estimates of the cost of providing quality mentoring. We suspect that the amount needed to support an effective match for a year's time is somewhat less than the $1,000 it costs BB/BS—but we do not know how much less. Program operators need better guidance about how many matches can effectively be supported with the resources that are available.

Thus, as new efforts toward developing large-scale mentoring initiatives move forward, we should learn as much as we can about how to go to scale and what the threshold cost for supporting quality mentoring actually is.

Utility of Mentoring for Other Age Groups

By and large, our research has focused on mentoring programs serving early to mid-adolescents. In particular, the benefits observed for BB/BS matches pertain to youth who were primarily 11 to 14 years old. Although less research has been done, we believe our findings have important implications for how to deal with younger kids, older adolescents and young adults as well.

For example, friendship-oriented mentoring alone is no doubt not enough for older youth about to enter the unfamiliar territory of employment or postsecondary education.

But the trust between an adult and young person that effective mentoring implies may be a necessary condition of keeping an older youth involved (see Higgins, 1988; and Walker and Smith, forthcoming).

Both the employment and training field and school-to-work efforts are beginning to incorporate mentoring principles into their programming. In particular, the idea of long-term career mentors is being developed. The Commonwealth Fund's Hospital Youth Mentoring Program provides one example of a program directed toward high school youth that attempts to combine aspects of mentoring and career development. We are now undertaking a study of this particular program. The study should provide information on the utility of mentoring for older adolescents, and how its practices differ from mentoring programs aimed at younger youth.

Less is known about the benefits of mentoring for pre-adolescent youth. Our upcoming U.S. Department of Education-funded work for the National Mentoring Coalition, a group of major mentoring programs convened by The One to One Partnership, will explore and categorize a wide range of mentoring programs for children; we hope to learn more about the structure and appropriateness of particular mentoring models and practices for these youth.

* * *

Assisting our young people to develop into the citizens, workers and parents that our increasingly complex world calls for is a difficult task, as any parent, teacher or youthworker can attest. It is made more difficult by the absence of one parent, and by surrounding conditions of poverty.

The challenge of growing up safely and successfully will not be permanently resolved for most youth in such situations by any single social intervention—it will take a strategic succession of effective interventions to accomplish that task. However, when we do find an intervention that plays an important and effective role in youth's development; that has important implications for many, if not all, of our existing youth-serving institutions; that is operationally feasible under varying conditions; and that has an appeal that crosses political, social and economic lines—we should mine its possibilities to the limit.

Endnotes

1. The findings are derived from a comparison of youth who applied to be matched with a Big Brother or a Big Sister and were subsequently randomly assigned to "treatment" and "control" groups. Agency staff attempted to match all treatment youth with a Big Brother or Big Sister, while control youth were placed on a waiting list for the 18 months of the research period. Youth in both groups were interviewed prior to assignment and again 18 months later. Further details on the study methodology and the results are reported in Tierney and Grossman (1995).
2. The study measured impacts after 18 months in the program.
3. These individuals may be useful to programs in other ways. Staff may be able to develop alternative roles that volunteers with less available time may be able to fill.
4. While we are suggesting that programs screen out individuals with these tendencies, it is possible that at least some may be redirected in their efforts with appropriate training and support. By identifying volunteers' tendencies initially, programs may be better able to focus attention on training individuals with greater need. However, there is evidence that volunteers who are not oriented toward building relationships are less likely to seek advice from case managers and less likely to heed that advice when given—evidence that lends support to simply screening these individuals out from the beginning.

5. The one exception we observed was the juvenile justice site in Atlanta, which relied upon the NAACP to recruit mentors for the program. Of the 27 programs we studied, only this one was successful in recruiting sufficient minority male mentors.

6. None of our research was designed specifically to address the issue of same-race versus cross-race matches; thus evidence must be interpreted with some caution. Nonetheless, all the evidence we looked at led in the same direction, viz., that, in general, same-gender or same-race matching does not lead systematically to better matches or better results.

7. We are currently involved with another such effort—The Experience Corps—which places seniors in public schools as mentors for youth in elementary grades, and in other positions supporting overall school effectiveness.

II. Summaries of P/PV's 10 Mentoring Reports: 1988-1995

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Partners in Growth:

Elder Mentors and At-Risk Youth

by Marc Freedman
Fall 1988

Many at-risk youth are growing up isolated from the range of caring and consistent adult relationships so important for navigating the treacherous course from adolescence to adulthood. An accumulation of longitudinal research suggests that adult relationships—provided not only by parents, but by grandparents, neighbors and other interested adults—are a common factor among resilient children, who achieve success despite growing up in disadvantaged and stressful circumstances. An important, and not often addressed, question for social intervention is whether the circumstances of more at-risk youth could be improved through efforts designed to provide greater access to these relationships.

In the search for new, cost-effective approaches to improving the life chances of at-risk youth, older adults are an intriguing potential source of developmental relationships for these young people. Elders are the fastest growing segment of the population, may be relatively inexpensive to employ, and are in need of opportunities for socially productive activity. There is considerable intuitive appeal to the notion of bringing together these two segments of the population for mutual benefit.

The intent of this study is a fuller understanding of what really happens when elders and at-risk youth are brought together. In an effort to develop this understanding, P/PV staff visited five exemplary intergenerational programs in Michigan, Massachusetts and Maine. During two visits to each site between February 1987 and May 1988, the research team interviewed program staff, elders and youth. Funding for the study was provided by the Luke B. Hancock Foundation of Palo Alto, California, and the Skillman Foundation of Detroit, Michigan.

The five initiatives involve adults in the federal Foster Grandparent program, retirees from several labor unions, and other older volunteers. They seek to aid teenage mothers, jail-bound young offenders, and students in danger of dropping out of school. The programs are B.U.E. The Work Connection in Saugus, Massachusetts; Teen Moms in Portland, Maine; School Volunteers for Boston; Teenage Parent Alternative Program in Lincoln Park, Michigan; and Teaching-Learning Communities (TLC) Mentors Program in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

The report also draws on a conference, extensive interviews with experts and academics, and a review of the literature on adolescence and the condition of institutions that have traditionally moved young people toward adulthood, a digest of views by current observers and actors in the field of adolescent development, and a brief review of current intergenerational programming. It also includes extensive quotations from elders and youth involved in the relationships typically observed.

The study sought to answer a series of questions and concluded with a sturdy appreciation of the potential of intergenerational relationships for youth at risk of a variety of life disruptions.

Will intergenerational relationships form?

The study found that bonds between elders and youth will form in social programs structured for that purpose. Despite a sharply age-segregated society and some initial hesitation, the participants were in most cases able to forge powerful bonds. Of the 47 pairs interviewed, 37 constituted significant relationships that provided benefits to both partners.

What do the relationships look like?

The significant relationships divided into two types, primary and secondary; the former are characterized by attachments approximating kinship, great intimacy and a willingness on the part of elders to take on the youth's full range of problems and emotions. In secondary relationships, elders served as helpful, "friendly neighbors," focusing on positive reinforcement but maintaining more emotional distance.

Do they result in benefits for the youth?

Benefits from exposure to the elders appear to exist for all youth in the programs. However, youth in significant relationships consistently cited an improvement in the quality of their day-to-day lives and described learning a variety of functional skills as a result of their alliance with the older person.

Young people in primary relationships reported a further tier of benefits. They described elders helping them weather potentially debilitating crises, bolstering their stability and sense of competence, acting as advocates on their behalf, and providing important access to the mainstream community.

All these relationships appear to help change a life trajectory from one headed for failure, to a more adaptive path of survival.

Are there benefits for elders?

The elders interviewed described meeting their own needs precisely through providing the kind of attention, caring and commitment the youth craved. Beyond simply getting out of the house and earning money, relationships with youth offer elders the chance to pass on skills developed over a lifetime, get a fresh start in a relationship with a younger person, and play the appealing and somewhat idealized role of mentor. The role also provides the elders with a challenge: helping youth change their lives. They find the assignment sometimes frustrating, at other moments exhilarating, and always engaging.

Why do intergenerational bonds form?

There is a strong emotional basis—not only among the surveyed participants, but fairly widespread among elders and at-risk youth—for the formation of bonds. Rather than being dependent on "chemistry," these alliances seem to occur when youth are receptive—lonely, at a time of crisis, ready for change and desirous of adult contact—and elders are enthusiastic but also lonely and intent on finding meaningful roles in their senior years.

The elders interviewed felt a special empathy that appears to derive from the marginal status shared by elders and youth in our society. They also appeared attracted to fulfilling the "Elder Function," the propensity of the old to share the accumulated knowledge and experience they have collected. Mentoring ability appears to be more easily expressed in the senior years of age.

Perhaps one of the study's most striking findings is that the most effective elders were individuals who had not lived what would commonly be considered "successful" lives. Many had endured strained family relationships, struggled at low-paying jobs, and battled personal problems, such as alcohol abuse. Partly as a result of surviving—and surmounting—such difficulties, these elders seemed to understand the youth, were able to communicate with them from their own experience, and established strong, constructive bonds.

Can program factors stimulate intergenerational bonding?

The elders' success with the young people appeared to be attributable also to their unique role and to some deft decisions by the five programs studied. The elders' location in an optimal spot—as neither parents nor professionals—left them relatively free from role constraints and untainted by the mark of authority. At their most effective, the programs reinforced these natural advantages by casting the elders in nonprofessional roles, giving them freedom to do their work, providing ongoing support, and structuring contact with the young people so that it was personal, sustained and consistent. Merely adding occasional adult contact to a conventional youth program will not produce the ties and benefits portrayed in the case studies that form the heart of this report.

Discussion

While much work remains to be done in this field, the study's findings are richly suggestive of the possibilities inherent in the notion of intergenerational relationships for at-risk youth.

First, intergenerational relationships offer **a new role for older people**. From the perspective of elder productivity, the discovery that a variety of elders can help at-risk youth is of great importance. At present, elder people have few choices. Many middle-class seniors escape to separatist playgrounds like Sun Cits, the retirement community Frances Fitzgerald describes in her book, *Cities on a Hill*; too many others of smaller means are condemned to isolation, illness and low-level work. Remaining in their communities and working with these young people is clearly a preferred option for a particular segment of the elder population. The fact that some of the elders who need the additional income from this type of challenging work may also be well-suited for working with disadvantaged young people is especially fortunate.

In fact, the five programs studied are at once programs for youth and programs for seniors, with both benefiting in equal measure. On the policy level, the experience of these programs supports the wisdom of expanding national service opportunities for seniors. Danzig and Szanton draw similar conclusions in their book *National Service: What Would It Mean?*: "Persons at or beyond the retirement age may have more to give and more reason to benefit from national service than any other age group."

Second, the activities of the five programs studied point to some **alternative directions for social intervention**. They show that it is possible to use unrelated, nonprofessional adults to intervene in the natural world of youth, a sphere usually considered the exclusive domain of friends and family. These programs aspire to do more than provide counseling, social support, role models or professional services; they attempt to seed genuine relationships, ones that in a significant proportion of cases take on the appearance of extended family. By using older adults from the community to fulfill these roles, they contribute to building what is essentially a self-help strategy. It is not surprising that these relationships often take on a life of their own beyond the walls and prescribed activities of the program. The elders give the young people their phone numbers, take them out to dinner, get them jobs with their relatives, and open up social networks to the adolescents that were formerly closed to them.

A third intriguing possibility suggested by the intergenerational relationships studied is that of **a distinct paradigm for youth development**, an approach that goes beyond the inculcation of academic and employment skills, the proliferation of computer-assisted instruction, and the emphasis on developing competencies so characteristic of many of our efforts to prepare at-risk young people for the world. Intensive personal relationships with adults are for the most part absent from social programs for youth, and the experience of the young people interviewed suggests that these intergenerational bonds may impart essential skills for surviving in a

tumultuous world, where landing on one's feet and developing psychological and social maturity may be just as crucial to achieving long-term self-sufficiency as a firm grasp on the three Rs.

These programs, by orchestrating relationships between at-risk youth and seniors, may be offering the young people a chance to acquire tools to develop future relationships with other adults. There is some evidence from other research that close developmental relationships with adults may be a common characteristic of resilient youth, youth from stressful backgrounds who succeed seemingly against all odds. Perhaps these intergenerational programs are offering participants access to resources and opportunities to develop the qualities of resilience that enable some of their peers to navigate successfully out of adverse conditions.

The programs studied offer many lessons for encouraging the development of intergenerational relationships, not the least of which is that it can be done. It is an operationally feasible goal. The models described in this report do not appear unduly complicated, are relatively inexpensive to institute, and may be applicable in a wide variety of settings and systems. Intergenerational programming is a notion with a potent set of natural advantages, and one that may make for appealing policy as well. Further programmatic and research explorations appear fully justified.

The Kindness of Strangers:

Reflections on the Mentoring Movement

by Marc Freedman
Fall 1991

Periodically, Americans rediscover the poor and set out to help them. In the 1960s, our concern found expression in the War on Poverty. 30 years earlier, it was manifest in the New Deal and its programs on behalf of the disenfranchised.

As this country entered the 1980s, many were envisioning another wave in America's cyclical response to poverty. Historian and former Kennedy adviser Arthur Schlesinger noted the existence of "a lot of pent-up idealism" and predicted: "That will increase, and in the 1980s, we'll enter a phase that will be much like the 1930s and 1960s." Eminent analysts all along the political spectrum echoed Schlesinger's forecast.

Yet the new decade shows few signs of another campaign against poverty; prospects for a second New Deal or War on Poverty seem remote. When President Bush convened his Domestic Policy Council in 1991 to consider a set of sweeping anti-poverty measures, it was decided, in the words of one member, "to keep playing with the same toys," only "paint them a little shinier." As this participant explained, "We didn't have any cash."

While eschewing anti-poverty crusades and the expenditure of significant government dollars to eradicate poverty, the Reagan and Bush administrations have propounded the virtues of voluntarism. Ronald Reagan complained: "We've let government take away many things we once considered were really ours to do voluntarily out of the goodness of our hearts." The Bush administration coined its signature domestic policy phrase: "a thousand points of light."

After taking office, President Bush set up a White House office to promote voluntarism and supported creation of the Points of Light Foundation, a private foundation dedicated to advancing voluntary efforts to solve social problems. Arguing that "millions of essentially good people are enduring a waking nightmare of want and isolation," the Foundation states that what these "Americans need most is not another government program, but a set of meaningful relationships that results in the conviction that their future is not limited by their present circumstances." In 1991, the Foundation helped to promulgate a hit country song built around the refrain, "All it takes is a point of light."

Reiterating the exclusivity of voluntarism and government programs, the President argued in May 1991 that what America needs today is "the good society," one based on private acts of charity. He contrasted this vision with that of the Great Society, which he said discouraged good deeds and individual responsibility. Indeed, President Bush elected to make this speech at the University of Michigan, where Lyndon Johnson had announced 27 years earlier that: "We have the opportunity to move not only toward the rich society and the powerful society, but upward to the Great Society," and to eradicate poverty "in our time."

The points of light notion carries with it an intuitive appeal that transcends traditional political categories. But the call for private action in the context of government inaction and the advancement of dramatic claims for voluntarism as an instrument for ameliorating the "waking nightmare of want and isolation" have also given rise to sharp negative reaction.

One critic derides the "thousand pointless lights," while another refers to the "1,000 points of fate." An editorial scoffs: "The President seems to think that legions of volunteers, acting in government's stead, will swarm over the ghettos and mop up urban ills"; another asserts that voluntarism, as espoused by the Reagan and Bush administrations, "asks the private sector to fill gaps created by American capitalism and vacated by a retreating federal government"—a strategy the author equates with leaving "the war on poverty in the hands of vigilantes."

In short, the debate over voluntarism's proper role appears stuck in rhetorical wrangling. On the one side, voluntary action is treated as a panacea for complex and long-standing social problems. In reaction, voluntarism is summarily dismissed and lampooned.

This essay attempts to clarify the real potential and implications of the new interest in voluntarism by looking at one of its most compelling expressions: the current movement to mentor young people in poverty. Mentoring is one of the favored initiatives of the Points of Light Foundation. Indeed, that Foundation's co-chairman has established a separate One to One Foundation, focused solely on mentoring. Examining mentoring offers an opportunity to illuminate both the promise and pitfalls inherent in the "points of light" approach.

The current wave of mentoring is a particular form of voluntarism, one focusing on the poor, primarily involving the middle-class volunteers and promoting personal relationships as an instrument for helping the disadvantaged. This combination is one of the most enduring variations within our broader experience of urban reform activity.

In examining mentoring's rise as a movement, this paper will pay particular attention to a set of basic questions: What lies behind the sudden interest in mentoring? What can we realistically expect from programs that focus on one-to-one relationships? What are the mentoring movement's broader implications for public policy? What does this phenomenon say about who we are as a society?

The picture that emerges is of a complex strategy that is neither a panacea nor vigilantism, a strategy with potential to contribute directly to the cause of helping young people out of poverty, as well as one that raises timely and important issues for education and social policy. At the same time, it is a strategy whose potential contributions may well be squandered under the weight of misguided expectations.

The story presented here results from four years on the mentoring "beat": visiting programs, talking to mentors and youth, following policy debate, and reviewing literature. It rests on accumulated observations, opinions and personal reflections emerging from hundreds of interviews conducted around the country.

While the central concern of this story is the fate of young people growing up in poverty, its major protagonists are middle-class adults—the individuals who have initiated mentoring programs, who are promoting them, and who have come forward to "do good" under often challenging circumstances.

The mentoring movement is built on the kindness of these strangers. It deserves to be taken seriously—for what it might realistically accomplish, and where it might potentially lead.

Understanding How Youth and Elders Form Relationships:

A Study of Four Linking Lifetimes Programs

by Melanie B. Styles and Kristine V. Morrow
June 1992

Youth need caring and consistent relationships with adults to transition successfully into adulthood, yet increasingly, many youth are growing up isolated from this support. The question that inevitably arises is whether this void can be filled by social interventions. One programmatic response has been creation of mentoring programs that recruit adult volunteers to work with youth in need of adult support. Although practitioners and policymakers have embraced the idea that these programs can provide youth with supportive relationships, little research evidence currently exists to support this claim. Thus, mentoring programs have been proliferating over the past five years or so in a knowledge vacuum, with very little common meaning among practitioners and advocates, and no set of established best practices or operational lessons.

Specifically, we do not know whether these matches result in relationships akin to those that occur naturally, nor do we understand the processes through which programmatic relationships are developed and sustained, or the role of the program in their development. Because programmatic adult–youth relationships have not been studied, we know little about what makes them effective, or conversely, what makes them fail to develop or decline.

This study—the first product of P/PV's four-year research initiative on a variety of adult–youth relationship programs—was designed to examine the relationships formed between elders (ages 55 and older) and at-risk youth (ages 12 to 17) at four Linking Lifetimes intergenerational mentoring demonstration sites developed by Temple University's Center for Intergenerational Learning. This study examined the activities of these pairs (what they do together and talk about), the relationship formation process (whether and how these relationships develop, how they are sustained, how and why they end), and their practices (what constitute effective and ineffective practices in these relationships).

P/PV interviewed participants of the Linking Lifetimes program in Springfield, Massachusetts, which serves young offenders; the Memphis program, which serves seventh- and eighth-grade teen mothers; and the Los Angeles and Miami programs, which target middle school youth living in high-risk neighborhoods. At each site, elders were required to meet at least weekly with their youth for between four and 10 hours. The elders received stipends, ranging from $2.20 to $6.00 per hour, and reimbursement for expenses.

We conducted face-to-face semistructured interviews with youth and adults separately at all four sites at two points in time. The first interview, occurring when matches had been meeting an average of 3.5 months, was designed to explore the early stages of the relationship by examining participants' expectations and early interactions. In the second interview, conducted approximately nine months later, participants were asked to recall and describe critical incidents or memorable interactions with their partners that were either pleasant or unpleasant experiences. Thus, participants' feelings and behaviors were explored by examining points in the relationship that the participants identified as being significant. A total of 26 pairs are the focus of the analysis.

Identifying Satisfied Pairs

The study is based on the hypothesis that in order for an adult volunteer's relationship with a youth to facilitate positive outcomes for that youth (e.g., improved school performance, increased prosocial behavior), an effective relationship must first develop. We define an effective relationship as having those characteristics that promote both pair members' satisfaction, thus providing evidence that a bond has been established. This study does not address whether effective or ineffective relationships influence outcomes for youth. It is, rather, a systematic attempt to define the practices of effective relationships.

The first step was to characterize each of the 26 pairs as being either satisfied or dissatisfied with the relationship. Three indicators of satisfaction were developed, two of which were the same for adults and youth:

- Feelings of liking, attachment to, and commonality with the other member; and
- Commitment to the relationship, expressed as a desire to continue it.

The third indicator of satisfaction was assessed differently for youth and adults. For adults, this indicator was their perception of being appreciated or of making a difference in the youth's life. For youth, the indicator was the extent to which they viewed the mentor as a source of support. To establish this indicator, we examined both the mentor's and the youth's perceptions of what the mentor did and how the youth responded, and found that these perceptions were not necessarily the same. Matches were categorized as being satisfied or dissatisfied based on aggregate scores across these three dimensions.

Identifying Effective and Ineffective Patterns of Interaction

Of the 26 pairs, 17 (roughly two-thirds) were identified as being satisfied, and nine matches (one-third) were identified as being dissatisfied. The 17 satisfied pairs were then compared with the nine dissatisfied pairs to determine if there were any differences in interaction in the following areas:

- How often the matches met or talked by telephone, what they actually did together, and what they talked about; and
- Styles of interaction, defined as how the adult and youth carried out their interactions.

We found that the particular activities the pairs engaged in were not a determinant of satisfaction. Both satisfied and dissatisfied pairs met regularly (on average 1.5 times a week) and took part in similar activities—eating out together, going shopping, watching/participating in sporting events, and talking about school, family, etc.

Differences were discovered, however, in the participants' styles of interaction. In fact, one significant theme appears to underlie the styles of interaction that distinguish satisfied from dissatisfied pairs: in relationships where the elder and the youth reported satisfaction with the match, the elder was able to identify areas in which the youth needed help, and to find a way to address those areas in ways that the youth accepted. While the areas in which the youth required help varied, the style used in addressing them was consistent.

Elders in satisfied relationships allowed the relationships to be youth-driven in their content and timing. They waited for the youth to lower their defenses and to determine when and how trust would be established; and to signal if, when and in what way the divulgence of personal problems or challenges would occur—indeed, to define the mentor's role. This process lasted anywhere from weeks to months, with the elders trying to determine the needs of the youth by identifying their interests, to build trust in the relationship by taking those interests seriously, and to work on those areas in which the youth were most receptive to help.

For matches in which the participants were dissatisfied with their relationship, the reverse was true. The youth did not have a voice in determining the types of activities engaged in, and the elders were prescriptive in determining the areas in which they would help the youth. In these matches, a degenerative process began: the youth tended to "vote with their feet"—to not show up for meetings and to withdraw from the relationship.

While the patterns identified were not observed in every match, and could appear in both satisfied and dissatisfied pairs, our analysis focused on identifying those central tendencies of the relationships that were most consistently reported, and that served to distinguish satisfied from dissatisfied pairs. Although no one match could be said to interact effectively in every way and none could be said to be completely ineffective, differences in styles of interaction were observed in the following areas: the adult's understanding of the youth's reluctance to trust; the adult's understanding of the youth's role in the relationship; the adult's emphasis on the youth's disclosure; the adult's methods of offering support and advice; the adult's attitudes toward the youth, based on the adult's perceptions of the youth's family, social class and culture; the adult's expectations for the relationship; and the adult's involvement with the youth's family.

The Adult's Understanding of the Youth's Reluctance to Trust

Adults in satisfied pairs were more likely than those in dissatisfied pairs to realize that these young people, like any other adolescents, would initially be reticent or reluctant to trust unfamiliar adults. Because the adolescents in these programs may have been disappointed by previous relationships with adults, most likely with their parents, these elders seemed to recognize that additional sensitivity was required and that the youth would need time to develop trust in the relationship.

According to the adults interviewed, the reluctance to trust was particularly evident during initial meetings. All the elders found the youth uncommunicative at first, and many times, the elders felt that they were talking to themselves. They reported that when the youth did talk, it was only to answer the adults' questions, and these responses were often monosyllabic or simple shrugs. However, mentors who were successful seemed to recognize the reason for this silence, and were able to avoid taking it personally. Instead, these elders considered possible reasons why the youth were not talking, and adjusted their expectations accordingly.

The Adult's Understanding of the Youth's Role in the Relationship

How the adults interpreted the youth's role in the relationship served to differentiate satisfied from dissatisfied pairs. Adults in satisfied relationships were more likely to include the youth in determining both the activities that the pair would do together and the areas in which they would help the youth. These mentors were more likely to follow their youth's suggestions for activities, and to select additional activities based on their youth's responsiveness. Conversely, elders in dissatisfied relationships were less likely to follow their youth's suggestions for activities or consult the youth about the areas in which they needed help.

Adults who expressed satisfaction with their relationships chose to work through the youth's initial silence by assessing what the youth were willing and unwilling to do. The elders did this by listening closely to what the youth did say—the things the youth expressed interest in, activities they described as being fun, careers they wanted to pursue—then tailoring their activities to the youth's interests. By allowing the youth to determine the relationship's activities, the elders enabled the youth to determine the direction of the relationship—the linchpin of building the youth's trust.

While the elders waited for the youth to express their interests, the mentors learned through trial and error what the youth's interests were. In observing how they responded ... to various activities that the mentors chose: going out to eat, going on outings, shopping, talking, etc. However, the youth's interests were not always recreational. For example, some mentors tried to design activities around their youth's career interests. And when youth in satisfied relationships expressed an interest in finding employment, their mentors helped them by driving them around town to interviews, and by introducing them to potential employers.

Mentors in dissatisfied relationships were more likely to follow the ineffective pattern of thinking the youth had no preferences for activities because the youth did not talk much, or of not taking these preferences seriously—defining them as frivolous. Interestingly, the youth had no problem voicing their preferences to the interviewers.

The Mentor's Emphasis on Disclosure

Mentors in satisfied relationships were more likely to realize that the youth might not be comfortable disclosing intimate details about their families or themselves to an unfamiliar adult. These mentors surmised that delving into the youth's private lives could be beyond the scope of their involvement, and instead waited for the youth to decide whether one of the mentor's roles would be as a confidante.

Conversely, the most common and critical mistake mentors in dissatisfied relationships made in attempting to establish close, trusting relationships was to begin the relationship with the activity that youth find most emotionally challenging, namely, by asking the youth to talk about those things that can be very difficult to discuss: poor school performance, criminal records, or dysfunctional or abusive family behaviors.

The youth did not appear to understand the importance of "having a good talk," and viewed their mentors' efforts to force disclosure quite negatively. Unfortunately, since these mentors viewed disclosure as an important criterion for establishing a successful relationship, they often continued to push while the youth continued to resist.

Methods of Offering Support and Advice

How the mentor offered support and advice to the youth also differentiated satisfied from dissatisfied pairs. Adults in satisfied relationships were more likely than adults in dissatisfied relationships to demonstrate their support, to respond to requests for help in a neutral and non-judgmental manner, and to offer practical suggestions for solving problems.

Demonstrating support. Mentors in satisfied relationships were more likely to offer consistent reassurance and kindness by reminding the youth that they were available to talk at any time, and that they enjoyed their time with the youth. Mentors also demonstrated this reassurance and support through their actions. For example, one mentor visited and wrote letters to his youth when the youth was sentenced to a drug treatment program.

Suggesting how to solve problems. Once an adult did become aware of problems, either through the youth's disclosure or through observation of the youth, he or she could either judge and criticize the youth, or attempt to remain neutral and offer alternatives for solving the problems. Mentors in satisfied pairs typically chose the latter course of action, avoiding reprimands and judgments but offering instruction the youth defined as being useful.

For example, in the beginning of their relationships, most adults were faced with missed appointments and unanswered telephone calls. How the adults responded to this testing behavior was instrumental in the relationships' development. Elders in satisfied pairs were persistent with the youth, explaining how much they enjoyed their meetings and their desire for continuing in the program. These statements were

coupled with practical suggestions for helping the youth to remember appointments. The youth in satisfied pairs who discussed family problems appreciated the mentors' assistance in negotiating relationships with family members. Their mentors provided them with strategies for getting through arguments that the youth implemented.

Criticizing and preaching. Mentors in dissatisfied pairs tended to be critical of their youth. The youth were very clear, as evidenced by their behaviors, that they would not tolerate their mentor's use of criticism, even if it was clear to them that the mentor did so in attempts to advise or instruct.

The Adult's Attitudes Toward the Youth Based on Their Perceptions of the Youth's Family, Social Class and Culture

Mentors in satisfied relationships were more likely than those in dissatisfied relationships to show awareness of the need to remain sensitive to the circumstances their youth grew up under. These mentors attempted to relate, on some level, to the experiences that their youth were going through—often by drawing on some event or feeling in their own lives. Mentors in dissatisfied relationships were more likely not to accept the youth for who they were or where they came from.

The Adult's Expectations for the Relationship

Adults in satisfied pairs realized from the outset that the relationship would be one-directional: they were the givers and the youth were the recipients. They understood also that while there would be benefits from the relationship, the primary benefit—at least initially—would be that they were active and helping someone. These mentors tried to have realistic expectations about changes that might occur in the youth and to recognize that the youth showing up for meetings, expressing appreciation, and having a good time with them were all accomplishments. Mentors who expected that the gains of the relationship would be great—that they would establish a "mentoring" relationship where the youth outwardly esteemed and valued the mentor and the mentor transformed the youth—were typically very disappointed.

The Adult's Involvement with the Youth's Family

All elders interviewed discussed the difficulty of establishing a relationship with the youth's family. Elders in satisfied relationships were more likely to inform the parents of the purpose of the program and their role in the youth's lives, making clear that they were not the parents' replacements. These elders appeared to respect the youth's family, but also understood that their relationships with the youth were primary—they knew that their relationships with the family had to be established through the youth. These mentors were careful to stay out of family arguments and distance themselves from discussing things with the parents so that the youth would not think or sense that they were "telling on" them. These elders were also more likely to select interactions with the youth's family carefully, and to not allow a parent to shape the relationship.

When mentors did extend their helping role to other members of the youth's family, they put their relationship with the youth at risk. One youth, for example, ran into a problem when her mentor revealed a confidence to the youth's guardian—a confidence that actually concerned the guardian. The mentor's attempt to aid the youth had the exact opposite result.

Program Practices that Appear to Promote Effectiveness

The fact that two-thirds of the matches were found to be effective is significant—it, in fact, leads us to believe that mentoring can be practiced not only by a few gifted adults, but by the majority of adults who come forward. However, given the difficulties programs encounter in recruiting volunteers (see Freedman, 1991), improvements in screening and training practices may improve this rate, thereby reducing the number of matches that fail and the risk of negative consequences for both youth and adults.

This report includes several recommendations for mentoring programs. While these recommendations are by no means definitive, they are based on participant interviews and conversations with program coordinators—in essence, the cumulative experiences of the four programs studied here.

The most important recommendations concern helping adults to establish youth-driven relationships. Since the majority of youth interviewed reported that they were interested in participating in the program to "go places," mentors could be encouraged initially to do just that, understanding the affective importance youth place on that activity. And since the goal of pairs experiencing effective interactions was for the adult to help the youth accomplish whatever they were interested in—going places, finding employment, learning life skills, learning to problem-solve, etc.—each volunteer could be told that following the youth's interests actually builds trust. Building trust is an important program goal, particularly since the adult volunteer may be the first person outside the youth's family that the youth will come to trust.

Volunteers could also receive training on active listening, a skill needed to understand the needs of the youth assigned to them, as well as problem-solving skills that the adults in turn could teach to the youth. Finally, the findings indicate that adults could benefit from ongoing training—throughout the course of the relationship—on setting expectations for the match and on establishing realistic expectations concerning how the relationship will progress. They should know that they will likely be frustrated initially, that the youth will be noncommunicative, and that they have support from program staff and other mentors to get through the initial and subsequent stages.

Final Thoughts

It remains to be seen whether or not effective relationships can produce positive outcomes in youth's lives. Based on our initial observations, we have been impressed with the potential for the development of programmatic, constructive relationships between adult volunteers and youth. There is ample evidence, however, that such modest interventions as mentoring are unlikely in and of themselves to produce long-term outcomes for youth. (See Walker and Vilella-Velez, 1992.)

But given the universal need youth have for developing caring and consistent relationships with adults, and the scarcity of such relationships in the lives of at-risk youth, interventions like mentoring can fill a significant need. We believe that well-implemented, programmatic relationships designed to address such a need play an important role in any broader strategy designed to serve the needs of at-risk youth.

1 P/PV will address this question through its studies of eight Big Brothers/Big Sisters programs, two pilot mentoring programs that match adult volunteers with youth adjudicated in the juvenile justice system, and seven college-based mentoring programs funded by Campus Partners in Learning.

Adult/Youth Relationships Pilot Project:

Initial Implementation Report

by Jeffrey L. Grem
December 1992

Public/Private Ventures' Adult/Youth Relationships Pilot Project is exploring the feasibility of operating large-scale mentoring programs within public institutions to serve and benefit at-risk youth. The two participating sites, in St. Louis and Atlanta, are serving adjudicated youth, aged 12 to 17, who are in the care of the state juvenile justice agencies.[1] As of May 31, 1992, both sites had completed the first eight months of the 20-month project. This report recounts the experience of the two sites during this initial period and discusses what it suggests about the ability of public juvenile agencies to implement large-scale mentoring programs.

Project Initiation

At the time the Adult/Youth Relationships Pilot Project was conceived, most mentoring programs were privately funded and operated, and served relatively few at-risk youth. The few programs that had attained any scale were typically collaborative efforts between networks of community organizations and public youth-serving agencies. Prominent examples of this type of collaboration were the BUDDY SYSTEM in Minneapolis, and PROJECT RAISE in Baltimore.

P/PV believes that before mentoring programs can be considered viable tools of public policy, they must be proven both beneficial and feasible to at-risk youth on a large scale. The latter seems unlikely unless public agencies with the mission and resources to serve at-risk youth are willing and able to operate mentoring programs at little marginal cost.

Consequently, the Adult/Youth Relationships Pilot Project was designed to answer a core set of policy questions about the availability of adult volunteers; the capacity of youth-serving public institutions; the usefulness of mentoring programs to such institutions; effective implementation practices; and whether youth and/or adult volunteers benefit.

The Program Model

The project's program model requires each site to be operated by a youth-serving public agency and assigns to each the goal of making one-to-one matches between 100 adult volunteers and 100 at-risk youth. The matches are to last for one year and matched pairs of adults and youth are to meet for several hours each week. Mentor support groups and group activities for mentors and youth are to be held periodically to provide ongoing training for the mentors and programwide support for the matched pairs.

The model also stipulates that half the adult volunteers at each site be 55 years of age or older. P/PV wanted to test whether this growing segment of the adult population constitutes an untapped, willing resource for serving at-risk youth. We also wanted to investigate the so-called "double social utility" of intergenerational mentoring programs—the possible benefits of participation for both youth and older mentors (Freedman, 1988; Freedman et al., 1992; Styles and Morrow, 1992).

The model employs two implementation strategies that P/PV's study of mentoring programs suggested would help the public agency meet the model's program goals:

- Developing a network of public, civic, religious and business organizations to help the public agency recruit the desired mix and number of adult volunteers; and
- Assigning agency caseworkers the responsibility of monitoring and supporting the mentoring relationships involving youth on their respective caseloads.

The rationales for these two strategies, and the consequences of the two sites' varying abilities to implement them, will be fully discussed later in the paper.

Selecting a Target Youth Population

After considering several at-risk youth populations, P/PV decided to target adjudicated juveniles in residential programming who were likely to return to their home community at some point during the year-long mentoring relationship. This decision was based on research findings and program experience suggesting that this population might derive particular benefit from the planned intervention, and that a growing number of state juvenile justice agencies might be interested in implementing the program model (Gottlieb, 1988; Schwartz, 1989; Miller, 1991; Eskridge, 1980; Cook and Scioli, 1976; Cook and Scioli, 1976b; Sigler and Leenhouts, 1982; Blackmore, Brown and Krisberg, 1988).

P/PV also hypothesized that the sheltered environment of a residential facility—particularly the limitations it imposes on the youth's movements and activities—might best support the development of a mentoring relationship that would be strong enough to survive and support the youth's transition back to his/her home community.

Site Selection and the Two Participating Sites

The two participating sites were selected through a Request for Proposal process conducted by P/PV during Spring and Summer 1991—a process that included the submission of a written proposal and several site visits by P/PV staff. P/PV spent considerable time identifying public agencies recognized for quality programming, discussing the proposed program model with them, and determining their ability and willingness to forge a partnership with community groups for recruiting purposes. Fifteen agencies wrote to express interest in the program; nine of these agencies submitted complete proposals. The St. Louis proposal was submitted by the Missouri Division of Children and Youth Services (MDCYS), and the Atlanta proposal was submitted jointly by the Georgia Department of Children and Youth Services (GDCYS) and the Southeast Regional Office of the NAACP.

The St. Louis site was selected primarily because of the MDCYS's national reputation for quality programming, and its willingness and ability to identify 100 juveniles in secure residential programs who would be appropriate for the program. The MDCYS St. Louis region operates five small residential facilities with a combined capacity of 130 beds and an average length-of-stay of about 4.5 months. All the youth served in these facilities are from the St. Louis area.

The relative weakness of this site was that the MDCYS, like most juvenile agencies, was a relatively closed system not readily known by the local community organizations it would approach for help in recruiting the adult volunteers. Nevertheless, P/PV believed that this site would provide a good test of a juvenile agency's ability to implement a mentoring program in a residential setting and would suggest the ability of a typical juvenile agency to recruit adult mentors.

In contrast, the Atlanta site was chosen primarily because the GDCYS and the NAACP were committed from the outset to operate the program jointly, with the GDCYS being responsible for the internal operation of the program and the NAACP being responsible for recruiting adult volunteers. Because the majority of youth served by the GDCYS (69%)—and by juvenile agencies nationwide (about 68%) (Flanagan and Maguire, 1992)—are non-white, P/PV was very interested in investigating the relative ability of a prominent black organization to recruit minority adults.

Although there is never a guarantee of success, numerous researchers argue that common ethnic and racial ties between mentors and mentees appear to be an advantage in forging connections—those ties mitigate barriers to trust and provide youth with role models that look like them (Freedman, 1992; Ferguson, 1988). There was also the prospect that the Southeast Regional Office of NAACP, and possibly the national organization, might collaborate with other juvenile agencies to replicate the model if it were proven to be feasible.

Because the program model stipulated serving youth in residential settings, the relative weakness of this site was the low number of such juveniles it would be able to serve. The GDCYS operates only one secure residential facility in the Atlanta area, the Lorenzo Benn Youth Development Center. Although it has a capacity of 105 beds, it serves youth from throughout the state and has relatively few from the Atlanta area. This meant that only about 30 percent of the youth participating in the Atlanta mentoring program would be in a secure residential setting. The remainder would be adjudicated youth living with their families in the community but still the responsibility of and served by the GDCYS. While P/PV anticipated that operating a mentoring program in the community setting would present greater implementation challenges for this site, we believed that the site's experience in this setting would provide an interesting contrast to the experiences of both sites with youth in a secure residential setting.

To help defray the cost of implementing the model, each site received a $65,000 grant from P/PV. They used the money primarily to hire a project director—the only new staff person hired at either site to work on the project.

The youth served by the two juvenile agencies have similar characteristics. They range in age from 12 to 17; the average age is 15. About 90 percent are male. In St. Louis, 62 percent are black; in Atlanta, 68 percent. At both sites, the youth had been arrested repeatedly prior to being placed in the care of the state agency. The committing offenses were typically crimes against property.

The Research Design

The project's research component includes three separate but related studies designed to determine the feasibility of the project's program model. The implementation study will analyze how and how well the public agencies at the two sites are able to implement the program model; the relationships formation study will describe the intensity and quality of the relationships between juveniles and their adult mentors; and the outcomes study will explore the potential benefits of program participation for both youth and adults.

Testing the Model

The sites have been making matches since November (Atlanta) and December (St. Louis) 1991. Table 1 provides information on matches made and dissolved at each site from inception through May 1992.

At this stage of the project, it is impossible to reach definitive conclusions about the mentoring programs' possible benefits for participating youth. To date, too few matches have been made and most mentors and youth have been meeting for a relatively short time. However, the initial experiences of the two sites do suggest possible answers to other core policy questions the project is addressing, particularly whether large numbers of adults will volunteer to work with at-risk youth and whether public youth-serving agencies can operate large-scale mentoring programs without a major infusion of new funds.

1. In the juvenile court system, youth are not judged innocent or guilty. They are either adjudicated or not adjudicated. To be adjudicated by the juvenile judge is to be judged in need of some sort of official intervention: probation, referral for service, or commitment to the care of a public juvenile corrections agency. Normally, youth are charged with a crime and brought before a juvenile court judge several times before they are adjudicated and placed in the care of the corrections agency.
2. The "committing offense" is the youth's offense that results in his/her being placed in the care of the juvenile justice agency.

College Students as Mentors for At-Risk Youth: A Study of Six Campus Partners in Learning Programs

by Joseph P. Tierney and Alvia Y. Branch
December 1992

College and university mentoring programs for teenagers and younger youth have flourished in recent years. A 1989 study found more than 1,700 mentoring and tutoring programs operating in institutions of higher education across the nation (Reisner et al., 1989). While there is a great deal of interest in these programs, little is known about them. In an effort to learn about their operating characteristics, Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) examined six of the 12 Campus Partners in Learning (CPIL) programs sponsored by the Education Commission of the States. The programs were at Boston University, Connecticut College, Georgetown University, Porterville Community College, West Virginia Wesleyan College and Xavier University.

While mentoring programs initiated by CPIL had a common programmatic core, the six programs in this study varied widely in how they implemented that core. For example, mentees' grade levels ranged from fourth to ninth grades, with seventh and eighth grade the most common levels. The programs ranged in size from eight to 24 matches. Mentees were recruited through either their school (four programs) or the public housing project in which they resided (two programs). Three programs held their meetings primarily on the college campus, two were held at the mentees' school, and the meeting location for one program was left to the mentors' discretion.

Two programs' activities consisted almost exclusively of one-to-one interaction; two focused on group meetings; one was evenly divided between individual and group interactions; and another was primarily one-to-one, but had one group meeting per month. All but one program had an academic component, but the specifics ranged from tutoring in school subject areas, to presentations on health education (e.g., AIDS awareness), to the teaching of academic skills.

This variety of programming, in addition to the programs' small size, limits the number of useful generalizations that can be made about this type of program. However, the program's core—involving college students in the lives of at-risk youth—did present common issues of logistics and relationship development across all six sites.

Our major finding is that involving college students as mentors presents special challenges, and requires administrative structure and substantive support beyond that typically provided. To participate in any community service activity, college students must perform a difficult balancing act: they must adjust to greater social responsibility and autonomy than most have previously experienced; meet exacting academic demands; and find time for community service. Moreover, those who select mentoring at-risk youth from among the many possibilities for community service take on one of the most demanding means of demonstrating their social concern.

Most of the programs we examined were not initially structured to take the unique circumstances of college student mentors into account. Programs that did offer significant staff support to help students balance demands were the most successful in bringing mentors and youth together consistently, thereby setting the stage for

the formation of constructive relationships. This support included one or more of the following: pre-match and in-program training, limits on the number of decisions the college students had to make, and limits on the amount of time and other resources the student was required to contribute.

Program Elements

Mentor Recruitment. The programs had varying levels of success identifying a pool of interested college students. All programs except one sought equal numbers of men and women; program staff reported that they were able to recruit a sufficiently large group of female applicants but were unable to recruit a similar group of males. CPIL shares this problem with other mentoring programs we have examined, none of which have found a solution.

Mentor Screening. Programs that established and rigorously applied participation rules and screening procedures had higher rates of mentor attendance at program events. These programs explicitly defined rules and expectations, and required mentors to demonstrate how they would fit the program into their schedules. Mentors were given every opportunity to drop out during the screening process, and were encouraged to do so if they felt uncomfortable making the commitment.

Mentor Training. All programs had orientation or training for mentors. Our interviews with staff and participants suggest that special efforts need to be made to enable mentors to understand the following: the nature of the youth's neighborhood (perhaps using a community representative) and background information on their own mentee; program rules—i.e., what is expected of mentors and mentees in terms of behavior and attendance; that the mentoring program alone cannot and is not expected to change the youth's lives; that an authoritarian approach by the mentor will seriously impede the development of a relationship with the mentee; that the beginning of the relationship requires special patience; that expressing interest in the youth's activity preferences is a powerful means by which mentors can successfully begin relationships and develop the trust of their mentees; and that recreational or "fun" activities are in themselves enriching for the mentees, who may not otherwise have access to them.

Mentee Orientation. Five of the six programs held orientations for mentees, with sessions conducted by program directors, student coordinators and target agency liaisons. All programs described the mentor as someone who would act as a friend, or like an older brother or sister. They also discussed program requirements with youth—requirements that usually included a behavior code to follow while on campus and specific program rules (e.g., attendance at program events).

We recommend that mentee orientation add a discussion of the structure of college life (e.g., breaks, exams), and its potential effect on the mentor and mentee's time together, and of the specific activities in which the pairs might engage.

Matching. The programs generally met their objective matching criteria by pairing mentors and mentees of the same race and gender. Beyond these objective criteria, the matching philosophy was simply to pair participants whom staff felt had similar interests and would work best together.

Mentor/Mentee Interactions. There was wide variation across programs in the frequency with which mentors and mentees met. Combining one-to-one meetings and group activities, mentor attendance (based on a weekly average) ranged from 35 percent to 95 percent. In some sites, large numbers of youth had met with their mentors only once or twice.

This wide variety in the consistency of interaction was primarily a function of the level of administrative structure and support provided. In programs where there was little or modest structure and support, students had to think of an activity; contact

the mentee and get his or her agreement; come up with an agreed-on date and time; get tickets and/or make reservations, if necessary; and do whatever else was required to meet the mentee on the day of the activity, including arranging for transportation. When logistical problems arose—as they often did—the mentor was left to work through them before even beginning to interact with the mentee. Programs that reduced or simplified these logistical activities—by establishing set meeting times, handling transportation and communication problems, and providing ongoing program training, support and supervision—had higher attendance rates and interaction.

Establishing set meeting times was, perhaps, the most important of these factors. The four programs that established set meeting times for all program activities—both group activities and one-to-one interaction—had higher attendance rates (70 to 80%) than the two programs that did not (35 to 40%).

The four programs that either provided transportation or required mentors to have transportation of their own had higher attendance than the two that did not. The combination of having set meeting times and making transportation easy for participants resulted in the highest attendance rates.

Program Administration and Support

Program directors spent from four to 30 hours a week on the project, and all but one program enlisted student coordinators to assist. While we cannot definitively state the amount of professional staff time necessary to make these programs operate effectively, our best estimate is that 20 hours per week is probably the minimum, even for small programs like these. The special circumstances and challenges of involving college students with at-risk youth make a significant level of professional administration and support necessary. It also appears that, depending on their professional training, most program directors would benefit from the help of a resource person familiar with relationship formation and adolescent development issues.

In addition, we believe that the likelihood that pairs will meet and that mentees will benefit would increase with the addition of a staff person to function as an advocate for the mentees—someone with knowledge of the youth, access to program staff and authority to resolve problems that arise. Establishing this role would make the program more responsive to the youth's needs; the current focus of the programs we examined is primarily on the college students.

Program Outcomes

Individual outcomes were gauged in two ways: through in-depth interviews with 29 pairs of mentors and youth; and through questionnaires administered to 52 youth and 50 mentors.

The interviews show that 45 percent (13 of 29 interviewed) formed successful relationships, when success is defined by the sum of a youth's satisfaction with both the mentor and the relationship, the duration of the relationship, and the youth's desire that it continue.

The mentors in successful relationships had a common approach to their mentees: they allowed the relationships to be youth-driven. That is, they took into account the youth's preferences for social and recreational activities before engaging them in serious discussions and academically oriented activities. This required a certain degree of role flexibility—knowing when to be something akin to a peer or older sibling, and when to take on a role similar to that of a teacher or coach.

Responses to the questionnaires showed the following: the mentors exhibited improvements in self-esteem, perceived scholastic competence and satisfaction with their social skills, but did not show improvements in communication skills, grade point averages or the sense that they could change the world. The mentees were exposed to additional social and cultural

activities, and their sense of control over their lives improved, but there were no behavioral changes or improvements in academic performance.

Overall, one should view the interview and questionnaire results cautiously. Several factors—inconsistently implemented programs, a small sample, high sample attrition and the lack of a comparison group—all make it less likely that the research could demonstrate definitively that participation in a campus-based mentoring program has an effect on college students or mentees. Such definitive statements require a larger, summative study.

Conclusion

College students and at-risk youth formed successful relationships in fewer than half the matches (45%) that were made. The attendance rates by college mentors varied widely among the six programs, from 35 percent to 95 percent.

This seemingly modest rate of relationship formation and wide variation in attendance partly reflect the newness of the programs and the staff's inexperience in running them. However, the challenge of implementing effective mentoring programs for at-risk youth that utilize college students extends beyond gaining experience. College student participation in this type of community service—which involves developing a relationship with a younger person and thereby has special risks of failure—also requires a significant level of planning, and a commitment of resources to administration and support services.

Big Brothers/Big Sisters:

A Study of Program Practices

by Kathryn Furano, Phoebe A. Roaf, Melanie B. Styles and Alvia Y. Branch
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In the early 1980s, a call went out for expansion of the number of programs that provide adult mentoring for at-risk youth. Advocates of mentoring cited the many studies documenting the fact that at-risk youth increasingly grow up in isolation from positive relationships with significant adult figures; other studies attesting to benefits to be gained when young people are able to seek out or attract supportive relationships with adults within or outside of their family networks; and a conviction that mentoring could ameliorate many youth's problems by attracting citizen involvement in low-cost, minimally structured programs.

In response, the mid- to late-80s saw a proliferation of programs seeking to provide adult support to at-risk youth. These programs cropped up under many auspices—churches, community-based organizations, the business sector and wealthy individuals. The adults who provided support were known by various names—role models, mentors, advocates, surrogate parents, confidantes, benefactors and friends.

The social entrepreneurs who came forward to develop these programs were inclined to create them anew, rather than build on existing programs. Thus, many new programs were developed with little conscious attempt to learn from previous experience.

And there is, in fact, considerable previous experience: through its network of agencies, Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America (BB/BSA) has been providing adult support to youth from single-parent households for nearly 90 years. In 1991, staff in the nearly 500 Big Brothers/Big Sisters agencies across the country supervised more than 70,000 adults and youth in one-to-one relationships. However, no comprehensive study of BB/BSA had yet been undertaken.

In order to learn from Big Brothers'/Big Sisters' experience, Public/Private Ventures (P/PV), with the cooperation of BB/BSA and support from the Lilly Foundation, The Pew Charitable Trusts, The Commonwealth Fund and an anonymous donor, has begun a five-year investigation of the effectiveness of the BB/BS approach to creating and maintaining adult/youth relationships, and an exploration of its potential for wider application in social programming for at-risk youth.

The research effort comprises four distinct studies, each of which focuses on a key aspect of the BB/BS program. They are: 1) how the relationships Big Brothers and Big Sisters form with their assigned youth develop, are sustained, and end; 2) the process of becoming a volunteer and a description of volunteers' characteristics; 3) outcomes for youth paired with a Big Brother or Big Sister, compared with those of a randomly assigned group of youth who are not matched; and 4) the program practices that undergird the one-to-one interaction for which BB/BSA is known. The latter study is the topic of this report.

This assessment is based on eight BB/BS agencies selected to represent the breadth, depth and variety of operations around the country. The agencies include two that serve only one sex—Big Brothers of Greater Indianapolis and Big Sisters of Central

Indiana, Inc. (in Indianapolis)—and six that serve both sexes—in Jackson, Michigan; San Rafael, California; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Rochester, New York; Wichita, Kansas; and Spokane, Washington.

Staff members at these agencies were interviewed during the course of a weeklong site visit, and focus groups were conducted with youth and parents, as well as Big Brothers and Big Sisters. P/PV research staff observed ongoing program activities, such as volunteer orientation and training, and examined program records. In addition, a telephone survey was conducted with a random sample of volunteers from the eight agencies. This survey was designed to obtain data about the frequency, content and duration of meetings with their Little Brothers and Little Sisters.

Findings

The new wave of mentoring programs can be roughly characterized as employing a laissez-faire approach that is wary of structural or procedural requirements. Proponents of this approach often consider mentoring a low-cost intervention that requires little in the way of staff support. Many of these programs, however, report difficulty establishing matches that meet regularly or last beyond their initial stages.

By contrast, the establishment of a relationship between an unrelated adult and child by BB/BS agencies is highly structured. Behind the hundreds of matches for which each agency is responsible is a professional staff with wide-ranging responsibilities for making and supervising matches, and for recruiting, fundraising and providing extra program services. Further undergirding individual agency operations are national standards that provide for uniformity in recruitment, screening, training, matching and supervision.

P/PV's initial conclusion is that this kind of structure and support is precisely what is needed if mentoring is to play a key role in youth policy and programming. The following sections discuss findings that support this conclusion, starting with a discussion of areas in which BB/BS agencies have implemented program practices that facilitate a high rate of interaction between Big Brothers and Big Sisters and their charges, and support the interaction of the pairs once the match has been made. This review of findings concludes with a discussion of the recruitment of volunteers—an area in which BB/BSA, like other mentoring programs, has experienced difficulties.

Making the Match

Like most other mentoring programs, BB/BS agencies consider practical, logistical and subjective factors in making match decisions. Unlike most other programs, however, BB/BS agencies take the youth's and parents' preferences into account in making these decisions.

Youth are asked about the kind of Big Brother or Big Sister they want—age, race, interests—and the kinds of activities in which they would like to engage with their "Big." Parents' preferences are likewise considered—the parent may accept or reject a recommended match in much the same way as the agency accepts or rejects applicants. As such, youth are much more likely to find the relationship satisfying (Styles and Morrow, 1992), and parents are more likely to support and encourage them in following through with their commitment to the relationship.

Rates of Interaction

BB/BS programs stand out among mentoring programs in both the longevity of the matches that they create and in the frequency of meetings that occur between the adults and youth they bring together. Nationwide, BB/BSA boasts an average length of match of one-and-a-half years. At the study sites, the survey of volunteers in active matches found that the volunteers had been paired with their current Little Brothers and Little Sisters an average of 28 months, with the longest having lasted more than 13 years.

The data also revealed a very high rate of interaction between the volunteers and youth. Virtually all (98%) of the first-year matches had met at least once during the four-week period about which volunteers were queried. In fact, they had met an average of 3.1 times during that period. In newer mentoring programs we have reviewed, the rates of interaction approximate BB/BSA's only in programs where the adults are given a stipend, or the youth are in a residential facility.

The data from the present study suggest that BB/BSA's effectiveness in creating matches with a very high rate of interaction applies equally to the various subgroups within its total client population.

Subgroup Differences

Girls who come to BB/BS agencies will likely be matched with Bigs sooner than boys who come forward. Once matched, rates of interaction are very similar for boys and girls, though there is a small, marginally significant tendency for boys and their Big Brothers to meet more frequently than Big Sister/Little Sister pairs.

In comparing combined agencies (which serve both boys and girls) and discrete agencies (which serve either boys or girls), one finds that the likelihood of matches having met during the past four weeks was higher for both boys and girls in discrete agencies. This difference was significant only for girls, suggesting that they derive a particular advantage from being served in a single-sex agency.

Minority youth typically wait longer to be matched than their white counterparts. They are thus more likely to remain on the waiting list for years, or to age out of eligibility without ever getting a Big Brother or Big Sister. In the eight study agencies, there were 100 minority youth on the waiting list for every 100 matched, compared with only 65 white youth on the waiting list for every 100 matched. This situation was exacerbated for minority males, 133 of whom were on the waiting list for every 100 matched.

Those minority youth who get through the waiting list are likely to be paired with an adult of another race—76 percent of minority youth in the survey were in cross-race matches. White youth are rarely (if ever) paired with an adult of another race.

Minority youth in same-race matches and those in cross-race matches were equally likely to have met with their Big Brother or Big Sister during the study period, and their rates of interaction were also similar. These findings, then, support the practice of making cross-race matches—a practice already justified by the scarcity of minority Big Brothers and Big Sisters.

Although these findings are encouraging, one should hold final judgment of this practice in abeyance, since the study also found that among pairs that fail to meet, loss of interest is more often cited as a reason by cross-race pairs than by same-race pairs. P/PV's forthcoming qualitative study of Big Brother/Big Sister relationships may provide further insight into this finding.

Supporting the Match

The BB/BS approach to creating adult/youth relationships undergirds the match at many points in its life—through orientation, pre-match training, post-match training, in-service training, extra-match services or ongoing supervision. It is this aggregate level of support that has resulted in the high rate of interaction that distinguishes BB/BSA from other mentoring programs.

Supervision is a hallmark of the BB/BS approach to mentoring. Caseworkers maintain regular contact with all match participants—volunteers, youth and parents alike—during the first year of the match, and intervene as necessary by providing information and/or referrals. In addition, any participant may call the caseworker on an as-needed basis. Since the caseworker is in regular contact with the youth and parent as well as the volunteer, the youth's (and parent's) concerns remain a driving force throughout the match.

Consistent with this emphasis, supervision was the program practice most associated with a high rate of interaction: matches at agencies providing regular supervision were meeting at the highest rates. Those agencies that—in an attempt to better handle increasing caseloads—reduced the nature or frequency of supervision saw, in some cases, an increase in the number failing to meet at all within a given period; in others, a reduction in the actual number of meetings occurring between the youth and adults within that same period; and, in others, a loss of interest sufficient to lead to a break-off in contact.

Meeting the Demand

Although BB/BSA is the oldest and largest mentoring program in operation in the United States, it, like many of the newer mentoring initiatives, nevertheless struggles to recruit volunteers in sufficient numbers for the youth seeking Big Brothers and Big Sisters. Across all agencies, and within the eight agencies that were the subject of this study, the number of youth actually being matched was only a fraction of the number who wanted a match. While its sizable waiting list in part reflects the program's appeal, it also attests to the fact that volunteer recruitment has not kept up with demand.

BB/BSA's difficulty in recruiting adequate numbers of volunteers applies equally to its traditional base of volunteers (the white, college-educated, middle- to upper-income individuals that it has traditionally attracted) and the newer populations that it has increasingly sought to recruit (minority volunteers, volunteers from working-class backgrounds).

Across mentoring programs, the amount of time volunteers are expected to commit is widely viewed as the single greatest deterrent to recruitment (Freedman, 1992). Thus, programs that have reduced time commitments have generally succeeded in volunteer recruitment: within BB/BSA, those agencies accepting less than a full year's commitment were able to recruit college students and military personnel who might otherwise have been screened out.

Similarly, reducing the number of required meetings was an effective volunteer recruitment tool. Once the matches were made, however, the dynamics of the relationship took over and these volunteers exceeded the requirements. In fact, volunteers at sites requiring fewer meetings met with their Little Brothers and Little Sisters at rates that were all but indistinguishable from those in agencies where the requirement remained the traditional once per week.

Conclusion

Since the mentoring field has been characterized as having "fervor without infrastructure," it presents an inadequate basis for social policy. However, there are a number of practices in operation at BB/BS agencies that appear to be associated with an increased probability that pairs will meet, and that, if emulated, could provide needed structure.

These include "hard" screening procedures for determining volunteer eligibility—e.g., police checks, personal references and employment status; a well-implemented and consistent system of supervision that will, at minimum, prevent egregious deviations from the program's policies regarding the required frequency of meetings; and a match procedure that takes into account parents' and youth's preferences. Future research will determine whether these procedures also have the effect of improving long-term outcomes for participants.

Mentoring in the Juvenile Justice System:

Findings from Two Pilot Programs

by Crystal A. Mecartney, Melanie B. Styles and Kristine V. Morrow
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Policymakers, practitioners and researchers agree that youth need positive, consistent relationships with adults to support their development. In high-risk communities, a dearth of such relationships in neighborhoods and basic institutions, and even in families, has been identified as a factor contributing to young people's difficulties in pursuing a constructive life path. Thus, interest in mentoring has grown over the past decade. Hundreds of small programs have been established to form relationships between youth in need of guidance and adults with the time and interest to forge constructive bonds with them.

P/PV has been exploring the usefulness and viability of mentoring as an intervention since 1988, when we conducted a study of five small projects that matched retired men and women with young people in need of supportive relationships. The study found that strong relationships were formed by a significant number of pairs; that the elders who volunteered were highly receptive to undertaking stimulating and productive activity; and that the youth, often in crisis and without much adult support or involvement in their lives, welcomed the elders' interest. These findings were corroborated by P/PV's 1992 study of four intergenerational programs developed by Temple University's Center for Intergenerational Learning. In both studies, approximately two-thirds of the matches were classified as effective, meaning that the youth and adult met regularly and established reciprocal bonds.

Through these and other studies of mentoring programs involving college students and local Big Brothers/Big Sisters agencies, P/PV has begun to identify the styles of youth/adult interaction most likely to lead to regular meetings and constructive bonds, and the agency practices most likely to support the constructive interaction that could generate measurable benefits for the youth.

At the same time, P/PV is interested in addressing the public policy-related questions that arise from current interest in mentoring: can supportive adult relationships be made available on a regular basis to the large numbers of youth in programs that receive public funds? Can mentoring be added to existing public services in ways that will not strain increasingly tight program budgets; will extend the services provided by existing staff without adding to their burdens; and will enrich the institution's services so as to increase its benefits to youth?

To address these questions, P/PV chose to pilot a mentoring model designed to bridge a youth's incarceration in a juvenile justice institution and his/her discharge to the community. Although the more than one million youth adjudicated each year to the juvenile justice system have problems that are notably difficult to address, this system was chosen for the pilot because the young people are in special need of help in making the transition from institutional to community life; and the system itself is looking for ways to improve programming, particularly in the community, and was therefore receptive to the introduction of mentoring.

With funding from The Pew Charitable Trusts, The Pinkerton Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New York, The Retirement Research Foundation and The

Skillman Foundations. P/PV conducted the pilot from October 1991 through June 1993 in juvenile justice facilities located in Atlanta and St. Louis.

The St. Louis program, which involved five residential facilities, was run by the Missouri Division of Children and Youth Services. The Atlanta program, which involved one residential facility and a variety of nonresidential community-based programs, was operated by the Georgia Department of Children and Youth Services and the Southeast Regional Office of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). In each of the two sites, the only new staff designated was a project director responsible for overall management of the mentoring program. Supervision of the matches was dispersed to the mentees' individual caseworkers, both in facility- and community-based programming. P/PV provided extensive technical assistance to the agencies as they set up and operated the program.

The research included documentation of start-up, recruitment and operations, as well as collection and analysis of baseline and follow-up questionnaires administered to all mentors and youth; weekly mentor logs that recorded adult/youth interactions; interviews with mentors, youth and agency personnel, including semi-structured interviews with members of 42 matches (mentors and youth were interviewed separately); recorded observations of training sessions; and youth's case files and program records.

Overall, the findings from this research are consistent with those of other mentoring programs P/PV has assessed: without a structure dedicated to training, supporting and supervising the functioning of mentors, the program could not meet its goals. Because such large public systems are typically constrained by limited budgets, the project design did not require sites to allocate additional resources. The youth's caseworkers were asked to add supervision of the matches to their already considerable responsibilities. In the absence of full-time supervision, slightly more than one-fourth of the institution-based matches met regularly for six months or more, and few continued to meet after the youth was discharged to the community. Less than one-fourth of those established in community-based programs met often enough to establish reciprocal bonds. In addition, the unique demands of the institution and the youth population it serves, compounded with limited resources, made implementation issues difficult to address effectively.

Given this experience and the research findings, we conclude that significant change in the system—including the allocation of additional staff resources, flexibility in working with volunteers, and an aftercare system to provide other needed services—would be required to integrate mentoring programs effectively.

The Matches

Adult volunteers were asked to make a one-year commitment to meet weekly with their youth. Analyses of mentor logs, survey data and program records for 157 of the 163 project matches indicate that nearly half (42%) met less than twice a month, and the majority (62%) lasted six months or less. Only 41 matches (26%) met regularly (at least twice a month) for more than six months, lower than the rates P/PV has found in other mentoring programs.

Comparing the matches that originated in a juvenile justice facility with those that originated in community-based programs, we found that half the facility-based matches met regularly over the course of the relationship, while only 8 percent of the community-based matches did so. As for matches that bridged the youth's discharge, 45 made the transition from institution to community, but only 11 (10% of all facility-based matches) continued to meet regularly.

In both the facility and the community, matches encountered problems that interfered with their ability to meet. Facility rules limited the activities available to men-

tors and youth, and the time during which they could meet. Many relationships ended before the youth was released because the mentor left the program.

Nevertheless, most youth said they valued the mentors' efforts. While youth were incarcerated, mentors offered welcome opportunities to escape temporarily the tedium of institutional life. For some youth, the mentor was the only person who visited on a regular basis. And, as noted earlier, about one-fourth of the pairs did achieve a sustained relationship.

Interviews with participants in both sustained and discontinued matches disclosed the following characteristics of mentor behavior in sustained matches: the mentors understood the importance of consistency (keeping appointments and being supportive "no matter what"); the mentor stayed focused on the youth in providing help, particularly in intervening on the youth's behalf and offering advice that the youth appreciated; and the mentor interacted with the youth's family. These characteristics are those the youth reported valuing in all their relationships.

Although most matches that transitioned to the community had met regularly while in the facility, their difficulties in meeting outside were similar to those faced by community-based matches: lack of aftercare and supervision, frequent changes in residence, no telephone, and problems with the law that resulted in reincarceration. Facility-based matches were most likely not to meet because the mentor was too busy, out of town, ill or had transportation problems; in the community, the cause of not meeting was more likely to be attributable to the youth—they were either too busy, could not be found, had run away or had been sent to an institution.

Implementation Issues

The project was designed to determine whether 100 adult volunteers in each program (half of whom would be over the age of 55) could be recruited, trained and matched with 100 adjudicated youth; whether supervision of these matches could be dispersed to individual caseworkers; and whether these adult volunteers could facilitate both the youth's treatment while incarcerated and their return to their communities on release.

Recruitment

Neither site was successful in reaching the target of 100 matches. Recruiting mentors for this population was both time-consuming and difficult, partly because juvenile justice institutions have, traditionally, few connections with the public and community institutions that could be used for outreach. The demand exceeded the supply; many more youth wanted mentors than there were mentors available to be matched.

The sites did have relative success in recruiting black men, a group that other mentoring programs report limited success in attracting. This success can be attributed to the targeted recruitment strategies employed, and, in Atlanta, to the name recognition of the NAACP, which managed the recruitment effort there.

Neither site was able to attract a sufficient number of elders, whose mentoring performance was to have been compared with that of non-elders. Therefore, this part of the project's research agenda could not be pursued.

Interviews with program staff and elder-serving organizations indicate that the recruitment of elders requires different strategies than those used to attract non-elders, since few elders came forward in response to either general recruitment efforts or efforts targeting black volunteers. Recruiting through elder organizations and churches with whom recruiters established personal relationships appeared to be the most successful approach. Deterrents to

elder recruitment included agency staff concern about their effectiveness with young offenders, the elder organizations' fears about their members' contact with these youth, the lack of public transportation to the institutions and elders' need for stipends, which were not introduced until halfway through the project.

Training

The majority of mentors attended at least one training session, but felt training would have been more helpful if it included specific information about their youth —his or her home situation, reason for adjudication and treatment plan—and the rules and regulations of the facility. A lack of concrete information is a common complaint of adult volunteers in other mentoring programs as well.

Matching

Consistent with the matching process of other programs P/PV has examined, the two pilot programs matched youth and mentors based on common interests and the youth's particular needs (for a strong male or female role model). Due to the complexities and structure of the juvenile justice system, however, the matching process proved to be time-consuming and complicated. Caseworkers were centrally involved, and the demands of their caseloads slowed the matching process to the point that some volunteers were never matched.

The sites were willing to make matches in which the race and gender of mentors and youth were different, since allowing cross-gender and cross-race matches yielded greater flexibility in matching and allowed more youth to be matched. The research found no differences between same- and cross-race matches, nor between same- and cross-gender matches, in terms of their consistency, demonstrated support and caring.

Supervision

Interviews with staff and mentors indicate that the responsibility for supervising mentoring cannot be grafted onto existing staff job responsibilities. Not only did staff's workloads preclude consistent attention to mentors' needs, staff felt they had no authority over the mentors and were thus reluctant to contact those who failed to show up.

The large number of matches that failed to meet consistently or last longer than six months attests to the problems inherent in this supervisory structure. Good intentions on the part of volunteers are not sufficient. Given the competing demands on their time, adult volunteers need consistent reminders and encouragement.

Recommendations

Adding mentoring to juvenile justice programming may be feasible, but only if systems can devote significant staff resources to recruiting, screening, training and supervising the mentors, and to facilitating their interactions with the young people. That would require changes in institutional practices and additional costs.

To systems that are willing to devote resources to a mentoring program, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Increase the number of volunteers gradually so they can familiarize themselves with the system and help new volunteers do so without overburdening professional staff.
2. Screen out adults who have overcommitted their time. If adults are too busy to maintain their visiting schedule, the potential damage to youth as they are abandoned by yet another adult may be greater than any potential benefits.
3. Increase the length, content and practicality of training. In addition to providing information on the institution and the assigned youth, training should cover appropriate expectations for the relationship, and emphasize that it is the responsibility of the adult in the relationship to contact the youth, and not vice versa.

4. Provide consistent supervision and support to volunteers as functions separate from those of staff with regular caseloads. Programs with staff specially assigned to supervise volunteers tend to produce matches that meet regularly and endure.

5. Adjust institutional rules to allow the pairs—as much as is consistent with security—more privacy for their meetings, more options for activities and more flexibility in meeting times.

6. Assign volunteers to youth in the community only as part of an established aftercare program. With mentoring as part of an aftercare program that involves regular contact with a caseworker, and such services as family and individual counseling, vocational training, GED classes and recreational activities, relationships will continue to have a programmatic base for meeting and may last longer.

While youth need caring, supportive adults in their lives, mentoring alone cannot substitute for comprehensive programming delivered by trained professionals. If adjudicated youth are to become responsible adults, they need comprehensive services—not only in the institution, but upon their return to the community.

Big Brothers/Big Sisters:

A Study of Volunteer Recruitment and Screening

by Phoebe A. Roaf, Joseph P. Tierney and Danista E.I. Hunte
Fall 1994

With many of the nation's youth facing tremendous challenges caused by deteriorating family structure, living conditions and socioeconomic status, recent years have seen the emergence of mentoring programs as a means of improving children's future prospects. However, while there is a strong volunteer ethic in America, the demand for mentoring exceeds the supply of adults who are able, appropriate and available to serve in this capacity. Even Big Brothers/Big Sisters (BB/BS), the best-known mentoring program, is not immune to the problems associated with recruiting appropriate volunteers.

Since 1988, Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) has been conducting a series of studies that examine the program practices and effectiveness of mentoring interventions. These include a review of six campus-based mentoring programs affiliated with the Campus Partners In Learning Program, four intergenerational mentoring programs developed by Temple University's Center for Intergenerational Learning, and a P/PV pilot program that examines whether mentoring programs can be integrated in the juvenile justice system.

The cornerstone of P/PV's mentoring initiative is our four-study review of programs associated with Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America (BB/BSA). The first study, completed in Winter 1993, documented how the BB/BS program model is implemented. Two studies are currently under way: one of the relationships formed by the volunteer and child, and one of the impact of these relationships. The other study, the subject of this report, examines the recruitment and screening procedures utilized by eight BB/BS agencies. Funding

from the Lilly Endowment, an anonymous donor, The Commonwealth Fund and The Pew Charitable Trusts enabled P/PV to conduct this assessment.

Questions addressed in the study include: How do BB/BS agencies recruit potential volunteers? Who is most likely to respond to current outreach efforts? What techniques are used to attract minority volunteers? How long does it take a potential volunteer to complete the process? Does the likelihood that a potential volunteer will complete an application or be matched vary by type of applicant (age, gender, race, education level)? Ultimately, the goal of the screening process is to separate safe and committed volunteers from those who are inappropriate. The answers to the questions presented here are intended to assist mentoring programs as they consider which procedures to implement for screening mentors.

Eight BB/BS agencies that employ varying recruitment and screening methods were selected to participate in the volunteer applicant pool study. We studied BB/BS programs in the following metropolitan areas: Indianapolis, Indiana; San Antonio, Texas; Chicago, Illinois; Winston-Salem, North Carolina; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Rochester, New York; Wichita, Kansas; and Phoenix, Arizona.

Between February and July 1993, agency staff collected demographic information from all persons who inquired about volunteering. They also recorded the dates for each step in the volunteer screening process that applicants completed between February and October 1993. Researchers

visited four of the study agencies in Summer 1993; they interviewed agency personnel, reviewed the files of recently rejected volunteers, and conducted focus groups with volunteers from various stages of the screening process. Staff involved with volunteer recruitment and screening from the other four agencies were interviewed during the BB/BSA national conference in June 1993.

Volunteer Recruitment

Between February and July 1993, the eight study agencies received inquiries from 2,532 individuals. Seventy-four percent of those inquiring were white; 58 percent were female. Potential volunteers were fairly young, with 66 percent of inquiries coming from persons under 30 years of age. As a group, potential volunteers also had a high level of education. Ten percent had attended graduate school after college, an additional 33 percent had completed college, and 38 percent had attended but did not complete college. Only 14 percent had completed only high school or earned a GED.

BB/BS advertising campaigns and public service announcements have contributed to the high name recognition that the program enjoys, and thus increased the probability of an individual choosing to volunteer with a BB/BS agency. Agency staff said the two recruitment strategies that attract the largest number of volunteers are television coverage and word-of-mouth. Local agencies receive three types of television coverage: periodic segments broadcast during the local evening news that highlight a youth who is waiting for a volunteer; public service announcements that are shown at the discretion of local stations; and paid advertisements for fundraising activities.

Word-of-mouth recruitment includes a campaign called the Recruitment Challenge!, which aims to generate interest in volunteering among the friends and family members of matched volunteers. As part of this Challenge!, these matched volunteers personally convey their enjoyment of the program, and the need for additional mentors.

As with other mentoring programs, BB/BS agencies have been unable to recruit as many minority volunteers as they would like. BB/BSA has made the recruitment of minority volunteers a top priority. In 1990, it issued a volunteer recruitment manual for agencies that outlines ways to increase the participation rates of minority volunteers; nationwide, the total number of minority volunteers increased from 8,365 in 1990 (15% of total volunteers) to 11,341 in 1992 (16% of total volunteers). Staff from seven study agencies said they employ minority recruitment strategies, such as advertising or seeking publicity in newspapers or on radio stations with predominantly minority audiences and developing informal links with minority organizations.

The Volunteer Intake Process

BB/BSA requires that agencies have volunteers complete an application, attend an orientation, pass a criminal records check, submit the names and addresses of several references, participate in a one- to two-hour personal interview, undergo a home assessment and attend a training session. The goal of this volunteer intake process is to help BB/BS agencies identify safe and committed volunteers and screen out those who are inappropriate.

When a volunteer applies, they must first meet the agency's objective screening criteria. If a volunteer fails to meet any of these criteria—for example, if a recent felony is discovered—his or her application is immediately rejected. Once an applicant meets all objective screening criteria, the performance and judgment of staff become crucial in determining whether an applicant is eventually matched.

The screening process typically begins with the initial inquiry—usually a telephone call and often an applicant's first personal contact with the agency. The performance of agency staff during the initial inquiry can have a tremendous effect. Focus group participants who decided not to continue in the intake process often cited a negative initial encounter with agency staff as a con-

tributing factor. Some reported that staff refused to answer all their questions during the inquiry call.

The performance of agency staff at orientation sessions is similarly important. While most focus group participants said they were satisfied with the level of information presented at the orientation, a few expressed dissatisfaction that the person conducting the orientation was ill-informed about agency procedures or did not have enough time to answer all their questions.

Agency staff describe the personal interview as the centerpiece of the screening process and the most significant source of information relating to the subjective eligibility criteria. The primary goal of the personal interview is to determine whether applicants might pose a safety risk to the child or be unlikely to honor their commitment. Many applicants expressed surprise at the thoroughness of the personal interview and the nature of the questions that were posed. However, most said that on reflection, they understood why such care was necessary. Several also commented that staff's willingness to answer questions put them at ease during the personal interview.

Once staff have gathered sufficient information on an applicant, the applicant is either accepted or rejected. Agencies differ in how they inform applicants that they have been rejected. Two agencies said they do not provide the reasons for rejection; their management staff attributed this to concern about lawsuits and the danger of placing case managers in an uncomfortable position. However, focus group participants from these agencies indicated that they were surprised and disappointed on learning they would not be told the reason if rejected.

Length, Attrition and Results of the Volunteer Intake Process

Across the eight study agencies, fewer than half (43.4%) of volunteers making an inquiry during the study period went on to initiate the application process, and only about one-fourth of those had been matched by the end of the study period: 27.8 percent of the 1,009 applicants had been assigned a Little Brother or Little Sister, 7.4 percent had successfully completed all screening procedures but were not yet matched, 29.8 percent were resolved-not matched (applicant either withdrew voluntarily or was considered by staff to be inappropriate for the program), and 35 percent were unresolved (had not completed all the steps in the process). That 35 percent of applicants were unresolved after being under consideration from three to nine months indicates that the process does not always proceed in a timely fashion.

We examined how the likelihood of reaching various steps in the screening process was influenced by race/gender, education level, age and agency, holding other factors constant. We found that the probability of applying did not differ by the race/gender or age of an individual during the study period. However, there were significant differences by education level: those with a college degree were significantly more likely to apply than those without one.

Minority female applicants, and white male applicants who had completed the personal interview, were more likely to be matched than other applicants. We believe minority female applicants might fare better than white female applicants simply because more white females apply than there are white girls on the waiting lists; thus, agency staff match fewer white volunteers. However, we cannot similarly explain why minority males are less likely to be matched, particularly since so many minority boys are on agency waiting lists.

Applicants with a college education were more likely to be matched during the study period than those with less education. The greater attrition among noncollege-educated volunteers during the screening process might be a result of either self-selection (volunteers might realize they cannot meet all program requirements or are not sufficiently interested); a failure to meet the criteria established by agencies; or a staff preference for college-educated mentors. However, college-educated applicants who completed the personal interview were no more likely to be matched than those with less education who made it to this stage. This indicates that noncollege-educated persons were more likely to withdraw from the process as a result of something that occurred prior to the personal interview. Once past that stage in the process, they were on a par with other candidates.

Recommendations

Based on our review, we encourage BB/BS agencies and other mentoring programs to consider the following suggestions when recruiting and screening volunteers:

1. Agencies should continue efforts to develop targeted recruitment strategies. Across our mentoring studies, we have found that using one set of recruitment materials is unlikely to attract a diverse group of volunteers. Recruiting from different ethnic, cultural and racial backgrounds necessitates multiple strategies. Given that most parents and BB/BS agency staff say they would like children to be matched with an adult of the same race, and that minority boys are disproportionately represented on BB/BS agency waiting lists, specific minority outreach strategies are vital.
2. Agency management should carefully monitor all interactions between staff and volunteers during the screening process, particularly the inquiry call. The importance of this first contact should not be minimized, since more than half (56.6%) of those who inquired about BB/BS volunteer opportunities during the study period decided not to go further in the process. Self-selection undoubtedly accounts for a substantial portion of this attrition; however, agencies should monitor whether unnecessary attrition is being caused by staff handling inquiries improperly or inconsistently.
3. The differential in the likelihood that college-educated and noncollege-educated persons will reach the interview stage merits further study. While the difference is likely the result of either self-selection, agency screening criteria, or staff preference, BB/BS agencies must determine exactly why noncollege-educated persons are more likely to abandon the process early.
4. Agencies should monitor the time it takes to resolve volunteer applications. A screening process so lengthy that about one-third (35%) of all applications were unresolved after more than eight months could certainly deter otherwise appropriate volunteers from continuing. Staff's need to simultaneously perform a wide variety of duties might be contributing to this problem. While BB/BS agencies do establish maximum caseloads for case managers to ensure a high level of supervision, they must also balance the case managers' other responsibilities so applications can be resolved more quickly.

Since this study does not examine the match itself, it cannot determine whether the volunteer intake process employed by BB/BS agencies achieves its ultimate goal—the identification of safe and committed mentors. However, it represents the first step in this process. Two studies that are now under way—one of the relationships formed by the volunteer and child, and one of the impact of these relationships—will enable us to examine the interaction between volunteers and youth after they are matched.

Building Relationships with Youth in Program Settings:

A Study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters

by Kristine V. Morrow and Melanie B. Styles
May 1995

Public/Private Ventures' (P/PV) research on Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America (BB/BSA) program practices—and on other mentoring programs involving college students, elders, middle school students, and youth in juvenile justice institutions—identifies a major challenge to these programs: ensuring that matched adults and youth meet long enough and often enough to offer even the possibility of establishing a relationship that could generate the life changes that mentoring programs seek to achieve. However, little is known about what helps these relationships to form, what they are like when they do form and why they break up. Understanding these mentoring relationships and their dynamics is the purpose of this study, Building Relationships with Youth in Program Settings: A Study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters, which was made possible by support from Lilly Endowment, Inc., The Pew Charitable Trusts, The Commonwealth Fund and an anonymous donor.

P/PV's earlier mentoring research (Mecartney, Styles and Morrow, 1994; Tierney and Branch, 1992; Furano, Roaf, Styles and Branch, 1993; and Styles and Morrow, 1992) showed that among the programmatically initiated relationships we examined, from one-fourth to two-thirds formed sustained relationships, based on the frequency and longevity of their meetings. In Styles and Morrow (1992), we took our first closer look at the relationships themselves. The 26 matches we examined in that study were between individuals 55 years old or older and at-risk youth. We found that in the relationships satisfying to both parties (two-thirds of the matches), the adults were more likely to have given the youth time to lower their defenses and develop trust in the mentors, while youth, in turn, were more likely to view their mentor as a valued source of support—in lives where positive adult support was frequently scarce.

The goal of the current study was to refine our understanding of these programmatically facilitated relationships in ways that could provide guidance to programs and mentors. We asked: Do our earlier findings hold when matches consist of youth and volunteers drawn from the more general population? Can we refine our classification of mentoring relationships beyond "satisfying" and "nonsatisfying"? Are there distinguishable expectations, behaviors or interactions associated with different types of relationships, and do they change over time?

We answer these questions by examining in detail the 82 matches made and supervised by eight BB/BS agencies over a nine-month period. The agencies represent a variety of program types in the BB/BSA network: two serve only one gender; some have medium-size caseloads, some very large ones; some provide extensive training and supervision, others less. The Little Brothers and Little Sisters involved range in age from 10 to 15 (average age is 12); the adult volunteers range from 21 to 57 (average age is 32).

Since we wanted to study matches that would be most likely to reveal the characteristics of BB/BS relationships and how they change over time, we chose matches that had been meeting for not less than four months (the point at which our earlier research indicates most "paper" matches start to become real) and not more than 18 months at the time of the first inter-

views. The longer-term relationships were chosen to illustrate how matches mature over their second year of life. The average length of match when the participants were first interviewed was one year. The second interview was conducted about nine months later.

Major Types of Relationships

We found that the relationships sorted themselves into two broad categories, which we labeled **prescriptive** and **developmental**.

Developmental relationships are defined as those in which the adult volunteers held expectations that varied over time in relation to their perception of the needs of the youth. In the beginning of developmental relationships, the volunteers devoted themselves to establishing a strong connection with the youth. It was only after the relationship solidified and the youth's receptivity was established that some of these volunteers started to address other goals, such as strengthening the youth's good habits. While most developmental volunteers ultimately hoped to help their youth improve in school and be more responsible, they centered their involvement and expectations on developing a reliable, trusting relationship, and expanded the scope of their efforts only as the relationship strengthened.

These volunteers, further, placed a high value on keeping the relationship going and enjoyable, both to ensure that it lasted long enough to offer the possibility of helping the youth and to provide youth with a variety of experiences or opportunities for simple fun that are often missing in their lives. Further, sensitive to the youth's satisfaction with the relationship, developmental volunteers incorporated the youth into the decision-making process with regard to both what the two did together and what they talked about. Thus, these volunteers were willing to adjust their plans—both for daily activities and for achieving overall relationship goals—to include the youth's preferences.

Both adults and youth in developmental relationships demonstrated attachment to their partner and reported a strong sense of commitment and desire to continue their match. Developmental volunteers felt satisfied with their youth's and relationship's progress—and when doubts arose, they were more likely to consult caseworkers for reassurance or advice. Youth in developmental relationships reported feeling a considerable sense of support from their adult friend—believing that their partner would be there for them in time of need, to listen or offer assistance. Developmental adults' practices of allowing the youth to "talk about anything," family issues in particular, without fear of judgment or reproach; reassuring youth of their availability when difficulties arose; and "just listening"—all these were perceived by youth as effective in helping to resolve or cope with difficulties. Such support, described consistently by youth in developmental matches, closely approximates the type of support most research on youth development concludes is key to healthy adolescent development (Werner and Smith, 1992; Rhodes, 1992; Connell, 1992; Scales, 1991; Cowen and Work, 1988; Rutter, 1987; Sandler, Miller, Short and Wolchick, 1989; Garmezy, 1985).

Prescriptive relationships, on the other hand, are defined as those in which the adult volunteers viewed as primary their goals for the match rather than the youth's. Adults in these relationships set the goals, the pace and/or the ground rules for the relationship. These volunteers were reluctant to adjust their expectations of the youth or their expectation of how quickly the youth's behavior could change.

There are two major subcategories of prescriptive relationships. In the first and larger subgroup, volunteers approached the match by setting goals (typically improving school performance) and focusing shared time—in conversation particularly—on achieving those goals. These volunteers often focused on admirable goals but had unrealistic expectations of how they could

be achieved. These mentors believed that their efforts could transform youth's values, habits, skills or accomplishments within a year or, at the most, two.

In the second subgroup of prescriptive relationships, the adults required the youth to take equal responsibility for maintaining the relationship and providing feedback about its meaning. In this way, the adult set the basic ground rules of the relationship beyond the capacity of most early adolescents.

Both subgroups of prescriptive volunteers resisted modifying their high expectations and ultimately felt frustrated. The youth were similarly frustrated, unsatisfied with the relationship, and not, surprisingly, far less likely to regard their partner as a source of consistent support.

While two-thirds of the 82 relationships examined for this study were developmental, one cannot generalize this proportion to all matches made by BB/BS agencies. Several important types of BB/BS relationships were not included in this study: those that had lasted longer than one and a half years, which were therefore fairly stable and unlikely to change over time (these matches are likely heavily weighted toward developmental relationships); and those involving children under the age of 10. The sample was drawn so that we could carefully examine how relationships develop, not to provide an estimate of how many relationships were meaningful. Thus, it would be incorrect to draw any conclusions here about the frequency of developmental relationships among BB/BS matches in general. This study was not designed to address that question.

How the Relationships Changed Over Time

Developmental and prescriptive volunteers commenced their relationships with distinct views of the BB/BSA intervention and its underlying purpose. Prescriptive volunteers believed that the primary purpose of their involvement was to guide the youth toward embracing values, attitudes and behaviors the adults defined as positive. Developmental volunteers believed their main purpose was to provide opportunities and supports the youth did not currently have.

Given these different understandings of the underlying philosophy of BB/BSA (which is "be a friend"), the initial goals for the matches were different for the two types of volunteers. The early goals of developmental volunteers centered on relationship-building and providing the youth with the type of support conveyed by the mentor's consistent presence. The early goals of the most prescriptive volunteers centered on transforming the youth—either improving school performance or behavior, or getting the youth to take more responsibility. While prescriptive volunteers realized they had to spend time establishing a relationship, their transformative goals were never far from the surface and became apparent to the youth fairly early on in the match.

Over time, the importance of transformative goals increased somewhat in the developmental relationships. After spending the time needed to establish trust and partnership with the youth, many of the youth in developmental relationships demonstrated a pattern of independent help-seeking and voluntarily divulged difficulties in their school or personal lives, allowing the volunteer to provide guidance and advice.

The goal of prescriptive volunteers—achieving change in the youth—remained the same over time. As prescriptive relationships developed, many demonstrated growing tension, with the youth exhibiting self-shielding behaviors, such as avoiding problem topics. This tension, in part, led to the demise of many of the prescriptive relationships. By the time of the second interview (nine months after the first), two-thirds of the prescriptive matches no longer met, while only about 10 percent of the developmental relationships had ended; and throughout the relationships' course, only about 30 percent of the surviving prescriptive pairs met regularly. In con-

trast, more than 90 percent of the developmental pairs met regularly at that time.

Thus, in the end, it was volunteers who took a slower, more developmental approach to their mentoring relationships who were more likely to meet mentoring's major challenge: to make the relationship last long enough to be helpful to the youth.

What the Pairs Did Together

What the youth and adults did and talked about was fairly similar across developmental and prescriptive pairs. They played sports and games, walked to places of recreation, ate out and just "hung out." They talked about school, peers and families. However, the process by which activities and topics were selected differed greatly for developmental and prescriptive matches.

Developmental volunteers, to a much greater extent than prescriptive ones, considered the youth's enjoyment important in breaking the monotony or stress of homes strapped for resources. Providing the youth with opportunities for fun was, in fact, a mainstay of developmental relationships. That such opportunities were important to a long-lasting relationship is not unique to the BB/BS context; this has previously been found in P/PV's mentoring studies, especially those whose youth populations and program structures most closely resemble BB/BSA (Styles and Morrow, 1992; Tierney and Branch, 1992). Prescriptive volunteers also provided for youth's fun—particularly during the relationships' early, building periods. But overall, these volunteers were far less convinced of fun's intrinsic benefits and, thus, were more likely to push "good for you" activities (without considering the youth's preferences or time frame) or to offer fun as a reward for "good behavior."

An equally important distinction between developmental and prescriptive matches was the process that partners used in deciding activities. Developmental volunteers spent more time negotiating with their Little Brother or Little Sister, making it more likely that the chosen activities would be mutually enjoyable, and that the youth would perceive his or her preferences as important to the decision, thus feeling like a full partner in the relationship. Sharing enjoyable activities with a caring adult appeared to impart to youth a sense of worth and of being cared for—a type of self-knowledge that youth-focused scholars agree is vital to healthy youth development.

Negotiation also allowed the adults to move youth, with their consent, beyond a singular focus on fun to intermittent participation in work- or education-oriented activities. However, when volunteers pushed youth in this direction, ignoring their preferences or requests—as prescriptive volunteers were more likely to do—the youth was left feeling mistrustful of the adult and disappointed in the relationship. These volunteers equally felt frustrated with both the youth's resistance and the progress of the relationship.

The patterns of communication between the adult and the youth also differed in developmental and prescriptive matches, again not so much in the "what" as the "how." Prescriptive volunteers seemed to feel that their principal goal of changing the youth could be met by clearly stating expectations and expressing disappointment when they were not met. In these matches, conversations were more frequently lectures, with adults pointing out the youth's mistakes from the beginning of the relationship to the end.

Because the initial goal of most developmental volunteers was to establish a friendship—one that crossed gaps in age and provided a bridge for the development of trust—these volunteers were much more likely to comment on youth's mistakes sparingly and to strive to neither convey judgment nor jeopardize the youth's trust. As the developmental relationships matured, the adults provided more advice, but focused it on identifying solutions and remained open to other topics of conversation.

Gender Differences

The majority of BB/BS matches involve youth from single-parent homes. Since the missing parent is almost always the father, Big Brothers and Big Sisters represent potentially different types of support to the youth. If successful, a Big Brother can fill the role of a missing same-sex adult model, while a Big Sister is a supplemental same-sex adult model. Given these inherent differences, one might suspect Big Brother relationships to differ qualitatively from Big Sister relationships. In fact, although based on a very small sample of matches, we did find differences.

Male matches in our sample were more likely than the female matches to have developmental relationships. This could be due to a number of factors. First, boys are much more likely to be referred to the program through a parent solely because the child lacks an adult male role model. Girls, on the other hand, are more likely to be referred through a school or third party because of behavioral problems. Thus, Little Sisters might be coming to the match with more needs and problems.

Second, women are more likely to use frequency of disclosure as a measure of a good relationship, whereas men are more likely to value mutually enjoyable activity. Thus, Big Sisters in both developmental and prescriptive relationships were more likely than Big Brothers to be frustrated by the lack of verbal feedback they received from their partner. While developmental Big Sisters were able to resolve their frustration with this lack of feedback through caseworker intervention and/or by adjusting their expectations, most prescriptive Big Sisters were not.

Third, since it emphasizes activities over talk, it is conceivable that the BB/BSA model is particularly conducive to male relationships. This emphasis may have sustained many of the male matches through the early periods when the relationships were maturing.

While the classification scheme was not fully developed before this study, our earlier investigations into the types of mentoring relationships in other programs indicate that female pairs were generally more satisfied with their relationships than were male pairs. It is unclear why this differential was not found in this BB/BSA study. It could be because most BB/BS youth lacked custodial fathers, and thus the mentor filled different needs for girls and boys. But further investigation with a much larger and representative sample of participants is necessary to answer this question.

Cross-Race Matches

Many minority youth are waiting for minority volunteers to come forward. Cross-race matches have been a partial answer to the long waits many minority youth experience. Although our cross-race sample is small (26), we felt it was important to at least begin to examine the quality of cross-race matches. The reader is cautioned, however, that our findings from this small sample should be viewed as suggestive only.

We found that the cross-race matches we examined were about equally likely to be developmental as were same-race matches. Although they faced challenges particular to bridging the social distance created by ethnic differences, cross-race matches were adept at handling these differences by focusing on the program model—the volunteer provided the child with an outlet for fun, developed a friendship and avoided "deeper" issues that might have made them and/or the child uncomfortable.

Practices That May Encourage the Formation of Developmental Relationships

The BB/BSA program model appears to provide a fertile medium for the growth of mutually satisfying, regularly meeting and long-lasting relationships between a relatively wide range of unrelated adults and a broad set of youth. The pairs in developmental relationships were typically more satisfied and met with greater regularity

than did prescriptive matches. Developmental relationships also lasted longer than prescriptive relationships.

Most of the credit for these comparatively sturdy relationships rests with the patience, commitment and understanding of the volunteers; however BB/BSA program practices and structure helped determine the nature of the interactions. Volunteers who had been able to establish developmental relationships were those who adhered more closely to the standard BB/BSA model, which stresses friendship. We believe lessons for other mentoring programs can be drawn from this finding.

While this study did not rigorously test the degree to which BB/BS practices were responsible for the development of good relationships, the commonalities we observed among the developmental relationships lead us to believe that strong program practices encouraging developmental behavior could increase the percentage of these relationships. The recommendations are based on our cumulative knowledge of mentoring relationships begun in Styles and Morrow (1992) and expanded and refined here.

Early Program Information and Screening

Volunteers' initial understanding of program goals shaped the way in which they interacted with youth and, in turn, the type of relationships that formed. Programs have several vehicles through which they can influence this understanding. The two most obvious are the initial information given to potential volunteers about the program and its orientation sessions.

The principal goal for developmental volunteers was providing the youth with opportunities they did not currently have. Sharing enjoyable activities with their youth was one of the most important features of these relationships, as was letting the youth have some say in the choice of activity. Thus, when describing themselves, mentoring programs should stress to volunteers that sharing fun and being a reliable presence for youth are, in and of themselves, valued goals of the program. Volunteers should perceive the program primarily as a way of providing needed companionship, rather than a means for helping a youth succeed in life.

Programs might also wish to explore more fully during the screening process what the potential volunteers believe their involvement with a youth will accomplish. Programs may wish to screen out volunteers who wish quickly to improve the youth's behavior, provide these volunteers with extra training and supervision, or refer them to a program that uses volunteers for, say, tutoring or training in a skill.

Training

Many of the adults who volunteer for mentoring programs have relatively little idea of where the youth are developmentally, or how best to interact with them. And yet the tone of a relationship can be quickly set at the beginning. Thus, it seems important to provide volunteers with prematch guidance. Although BB/BSA does not require volunteer training, many sites provide it, and volunteers in this study who did receive such training seemed to value it.

This report suggests that perhaps the most important lessons that training should attempt to teach mentors are that building a relationship cannot be rushed, and that any attempts to effect behavioral change will not be very effective unless there is a solid relationship between the adult and youth, and the youth is receptive to the adult's input. Volunteers who push too quickly to change behaviors they do not like in the youth are likely to jeopardize the relationship and unlikely to effect change.

Specific areas of training that are likely to be useful include teaching volunteers what difficulties they might expect over the course of the relationship and how to deal with them. Future mentors should come to understand the importance of their early interactions. While they do not articulate

it, youth often use this period to test the volunteer and see what the volunteer is like. Thus, besides discussing the advantages and disadvantages of alternative styles of interaction, training could also cover how to interpret and cope with common frustrating experiences with youth, such as reluctance to talk, missed appointments, unanswered phone calls and exaggerated demands.

Providing the adults with skills and techniques to deal appropriately with these frustrations would also be useful. For example, it is important from the beginning of the relationship to try to involve youth in decisions about what to do. Considering the youth's preferences, however, did not mean always doing what the youth wanted, but rather discussing and negotiating until an activity that was satisfactory to both parties was determined. Thus, as many BB/BS agencies realize, volunteer training in negotiating skills and appropriate limit-setting can be beneficial.

Some BB/BS agencies also provide training in active listening. Often, youth just wanted someone to listen to their problems, and valued volunteers who listened without proffering immediate or extensive advice. Active listening skills helped volunteers identify their youth's needs, and conveyed to the youth that the adult was caring and attentive.

Supervision

The regular supervision provided for in the BB/BSA model (at first monthly, then quarterly) gives adults the feedback they may need to keep them working productively at the relationship. Although training can provide volunteers with an understanding of youth in general and give the adults guidance, the impact of initial training will be lost over time. While ongoing training could mitigate this loss, caseworkers can reinforce training's lessons and help volunteers adapt them to particular situations. Case managers can help the volunteers understand the meaning of a youth's behavior, provide the adult with reassurance and help volunteers cope with the youth's developmental limitations.

This type of support for the volunteer is especially important early in a match. Even volunteers who understand that building a relationship with an unrelated youth can take a long time can become frustrated by the apparent lack of response most youth show their mentors early in the match. Caseworkers can help volunteers get through the initial and subsequent stages.

Ongoing supervision can also help volunteers curb their desire to correct what they define as undesirable behavior. Volunteers in developmental relationships did not try to pursue other goals, such as improving school performance or having the youth be more responsible, before a good relationship was worked out—often many months into the match. Even after that, they never let such goals swamp the primary goal of providing the youth with a consistent, supportive adult friend.

Conclusion

It remains to be seen whether developmental mentoring relationships can produce real changes in the lives of youth, such as improved grades and more positive behavior. Based on this study and our other investigations, we are impressed with the potential that well-run mentoring programs have in building constructive relationships between unrelated adults and youth. However, the youth policy field is full of examples of well-run interventions that have no long-term effects on the lives of youth (Walker and Vilella-Velez, 1992). The results from our coming impact study of BB/BSA will speak to the question of how mentoring affects the lives of youth.

In the meantime, these observations of how relationships develop provide an important basis for identifying relationship practices that promote both BB/BS matches and, more broadly, programmatically created relationships that meet some of the support needs of at-risk youth.

In the same vein, our identification of what makes prescriptive matches offers insights into relationship practices that are less supportive for at-risk youth.

Given the benefits research shows that youth derive from caring and consistent relationships with adults, and the scarcity of such relationships in the lives of many youth, there is significant need for interventions like mentoring. We believe that well-implemented programmatic relationships designed to address this need play an important role in any broader strategy designed to serve the needs of youth, especially youth in high-risk environments.

Making a Difference:

An Impact Study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters

by Joseph P. Tierney, Jean Baldwin Grossman, with Nancy L. Resch
November 1995

The past decade has seen widespread enthusiasm for mentoring as a way to address the needs and problems of youth—but no firm evidence that mentoring programs produce results. We now have that evidence.

In this report, Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) provides scientifically reliable evidence that mentoring programs can positively affect young people. This evidence derives from research conducted at local affiliates of Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America (BB/BSA), the oldest, best-known and, arguably, the most sophisticated mentoring program in the United States. Big Brothers/Big Sisters (BB/BS) programs currently maintain 75,000 active matches between a volunteer adult and a youngster. Both the programs and matches are governed by carefully established procedures and criteria.

P/PV conducted a comparative study of 959 10- to 16-year-olds who applied to BB/BS programs in 1992 and 1993. Half of these youth were randomly assigned to a treatment group, for which BB/BS matches were made or attempted; the other half were assigned to BB/BS waiting lists. We compared the two groups after 18 months and found that participants in a BB/BS program:

- Were less likely to start using drugs and alcohol;
- Were less likely to hit someone;
- Improved school attendance and performance, and attitudes toward completing schoolwork; and
- Improved peer and family relationships.

This report is part of P/PV's eight-year investigation of a range of adult-youth relationship projects. In other reports, we have examined program practices; volunteer recruitment and screening in BB/BS programs; and the characteristics of adult-youth relationships in BB/BS and other mentoring programs.

An Effective Approach to One-to-One Mentoring

The findings presented in this report reflect the workings of a carefully structured approach to mentoring. Understanding how BB/BS programs operate and the standards they adhere to is important, since many other mentoring programs are not as well-structured or carefully managed as the BB/BS programs whose matches we studied.

Local BB/BS programs are autonomously funded affiliates of BB/BSA. In addition to providing ongoing support and representation for its affiliates, the BB/BSA national office serves the critical function of promulgating criteria and standards that largely determine the development, maintenance and quality of local matches.

To be formally designated a Big Brothers or Big Sisters program, local agencies must adopt these standards, with minor variations allowed to accommodate local characteristics. The standards govern the screening and acceptance of both youth and adults; the training and orientation volunteers must undergo; the matching process; required meeting frequency; and the ongoing supervision of matches, which involves regular contact between the agency and the adult volunteer, the youth and the parent.

Most local programs operate in more or less the same way: they recruit and carefully screen volunteer applicants for one-to-one matches; they screen youth, who usually come from single-parent households and who must (along with their parents) desire to enter into a match; and they carefully match adult volunteers with youngsters based on backgrounds, on the stated preferences of adult volunteers, parents and youth, and on geographic proximity. On average, the adult-youth pair meets for three to four hours three times per month for at least a year.

In cooperation with the national BB/BSA office, P/PV chose eight local, accredited BB/BS agencies for this study. We used two criteria in selecting agencies. The first was a large caseload; our aim was to select from the largest BB/BS agencies so as to generate adequate numbers of youth for the research sample and to minimize the impact of research activities on agency operations. The second was geographic diversity. The selected sites represent most regions of the United States; they are located in Philadelphia; Rochester, New York; Minneapolis; Columbus, Ohio; Wichita, Kansas; Houston; San Antonio; and Phoenix.

Study Design and Sample Youth

The sample youth were between 10 and 16 years old (with 93% between 10 and 14) when they were found eligible for the BB/BS program. Just over 60 percent were boys, and more than half were minority group members (of those, about 70 percent were African American). Almost all lived with one parent (the mother, in most cases), the rest with a guardian or relatives. Many were from low-income households, and a significant number came from households with a prior history of either family violence or substance abuse.

Our research strategy was to compare youth who participated in BB/BS programs with those who did not. Thus, we conducted baseline interviews with all youth at the time they were found eligible for the program, then randomly assigned them either to the treatment group, who were immediately eligible to be matched with adult volunteers, or to the control group, who remained on a waiting list for 18 months—a not uncommon waiting period among BB/BS applicants.

Both groups were re-interviewed 18 months later. Of the 1,138 youth originally randomized, 959 (84.3%) completed both baseline and follow-up interviews, thus becoming the sample on which findings are based. Of the 487 youth in the treatment group, 378 were matched with a Big Brother or Big Sister, and received the agency support and supervision that would typically be provided. The matched Little Brothers and Little Sisters met with their Big Brother or Big Sister for an average of almost 12 months, with meetings about three times per month lasting about four hours each time.

The aim of the research was to determine whether a one-to-one mentoring experience made a tangible difference in the lives of these young people. We chose six broad areas in which we hypothesized that the mentoring experience might have effects, identified in large part through discussions with local program staff, and a review of the guidelines and other materials produced by the national BB/BSA office. The six areas were antisocial activities; academic performance, attitudes and behaviors; relationships with family; relationships with friends; self-concept; and social and cultural enrichment.

All findings reported here are based on self-reported data, obtained from baseline and follow-up interviews or from forms completed by agency staff. Analysis of these data involved multivariate techniques that compared the follow-up survey results for treatment and control youth, controlling for baseline characteristics.[1]

Major Findings

The overall findings are positive. The following are the most noteworthy results:

- Little Brothers and Little Sisters were 46 percent less likely than controls to initiate drug use during the study period. Our results indicate that for every 100 youth in this age group who start to use drugs, only 54 similar youth who have a Big Brother or Big Sister will start using drugs. An even stronger effect was found for minority Little Brothers and Little Sisters, who were 70 percent less likely to initiate drug use than other similar minority youth.[1]
- Little Brothers and Little Sisters were 27 percent less likely than controls to initiate alcohol use during the study period, and minority Little Sisters were only about one-half as likely to initiate alcohol use.
- Little Brothers and Little Sisters were almost one-third less likely than controls to hit someone.
- Little Brothers and Little Sisters skipped half as many days of school as did control youth, felt more competent about doing schoolwork, skipped fewer classes and showed modest gains in their grade point averages. These gains were strongest among Little Sisters, particularly minority Little Sisters.
- The quality of relationships with parents was better for Little Brothers and Little Sisters than for controls at the end of the study period, due primarily to a higher level of trust in the parent. This effect was strongest for white Little Brothers.
- Likewise, there were improvements in Little Brothers' and Little Sisters' relationships with their peers relative to their control counterparts, an effect most strongly evidenced among minority Little Brothers.

We did not find statistically significant improvements in self-concept, nor in the number of social and cultural activities in which Little Brothers and Little Sisters participated.

Conclusions

Our research presents clear and encouraging evidence that caring relationships between adults and youth can be created and supported by programs, and can yield a wide range of tangible benefits.

The most notable results are the deterrent effect on initiation of drug and alcohol use, and the overall positive effects on academic performance that the mentoring experience produced. Improvement in grade point average among Little Brothers and Little Sisters, while small in percentage terms, is still very encouraging, since non-academic interventions are rarely capable of producing effects in grade performance.

These findings, however, do not mean that the benefits of mentoring occur automatically. The research, as noted previously, describes the effects of mentoring in experienced, specialized local programs that adhere to well-developed quality standards. In our judgment, the standards and supports BB/BS programs employ are critical in making the relationships work, and thus in generating the strong impacts we have reported. If such standards and supports can be duplicated, the expansion and replication of mentoring initiatives for early adolescents would appear to be a strong and sensible investment, from which at least several million youth could benefit.

Yet this raises two critical issues. First, is there a sufficient number of volunteers who would be willing to make the time and emotional commitment? The indications from prior research are inconclusive.

The second issue is that the support and supervision necessary for mentoring initiatives to produce effective matches cost money—roughly $1,000 per match. It is extremely unlikely that significant expansion could be accomplished entirely with private funds. Public funding also seems unlikely at this time, when budgets for social programs are being drastically cut at the federal level and social policy interventions are widely viewed by the public as ineffective.

However, evidence of effectiveness like that contained in this report—especially around issues of drugs, violence and schooling—may influence the public's view of what can be accomplished, and may also stimulate policymakers to begin shaping a new and more effective social policy approach for youth—one that focuses less on specific problems after they occur, and more on meeting youth's most basic developmental needs.

1. Chapter V and Appendix A of the full report provide descriptions of the measures and analytical techniques used in the analysis.
2. Chapter V of the report provides detailed findings for the full sample, and for four subgroups: white boys, white girls, minority boys and minority girls.

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